

An ornate decorative frame surrounds the title and author's name. It features a central arch with a finial at the top, and two vertical pillars on the sides. The pillars are adorned with intricate carvings and have small decorative panels near the base. Chains or garlands appear to drape across the top of the arch.

INDIA INKLINGS

MARGARET T.
APPLEGARTH

~~Miss Robert~~ 30





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INDIA INKLINGS

MARGARET T. APPLEGARTH



*Little drops of ink, little lines of pen,
Make the India Inklings tell us why and when.*

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Ink is the friendliest little soul that ever was—and quite the Greatest Introducer in the world: “Come now, let me make you two acquainted!” is the tune he daily sings, as he writes *dictionaries* to make strange words familiar, *arithmetics* to make slippery sums give proper answers, and *geographies* to make vast continents nod pleasantly to one another. As for *story-books*, perhaps you will be glad to meet even a blot when the India Ink uncorks his inklings for you!

INDIA INKLINGS

THE STORY OF A BLOT

BY

MARGARET T. APPLEGARTH

*Author of "Lamplighters Across the Sea," "Missionary
Stories for Little Folks," etc.*

WITH INKLINGS DRAWN
BY THE AUTHOR



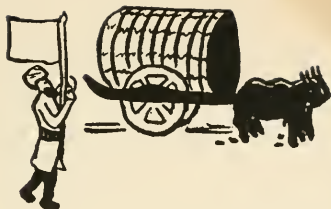
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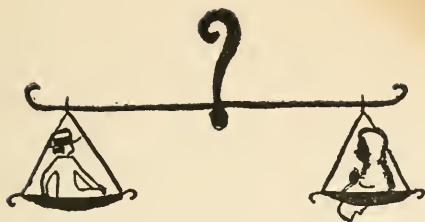


HERE ARE ALL THE STORY CHAPTERS

They call this page a "TABLE of Contents" in grown-up books, as if you were invited to sit down and order a meal from a menu card; but it never would do to eat an Inkling (ask grandfather in Chapter XIII). So I really like our way the best, don't you?

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*AND THESE ARE THE INKLINGS THAT YOU
WILL SEE*

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*Little drops of ink, little lines of pen,
Make the India Inklings tell us why and when.*

AND THESE ARE THE PEOPLE YOU WILL READ ABOUT

DEVIDAS, the villain of this tale, I fear; although he did the best he knew, and eventually lived out the meaning of his Indian name, "Servant of God." Meanwhile imagine naming his daughter—

MACHAMMA (our heroine) who began by being only a Blot, who ended by being Joy.

PITCHAMMA, her dear puzzled mother, with another all wrong name, meaning "Crazy One."

MANIKAM, her cousin, that great discoverer of scales and clocks and drops of water who brought home many inklings of a new life to

GRANDFATHER }

GRANNY

UNCLES

AUNTS

} the rest of their family.

MRS. DRAKE, only she will really never be called this probably, since to Tim and to Tom and to us she is "Bonnie Aunt," to the Blot she is "Amma," to the morning glories their "Bit-of-Whiteness," while to every one else in the Town of the Twisted Tulsi Tree she is "Mem Sahib."

DR. DRAKE, known in India as the "Doctor Sahib," but to Tim and Tom as "Uncle Harry," alias "Mr. Pied Piper, M.D."

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KRYPAMMA ("Grace").

LAKSHMAMMA ("The Fortunate One").

DUKHI ("One in Pain").

MANORAMA ("Heart's Joy").

RICHER-THAN-RUBIES, the little brown saint, who was their Bible woman.

SATHIAVADAM, that brown man of wisdom, teacher of boys.

NURSAI (with a crick in his back
from gathering fagots) }

PURUSHOTHAM (the carpenter) }

CHUNDER SINGH (the farmer) } Three wise men
who brought pre-
cious gifts to the
Saviour.

TIM and TOM, the Twinnies, who walk in and out of these pages trailing clouds of glory, and mailing a dozen nice things to India which you really might mail yourself, now that you've had an inkling or two of what's needed.

'As for the queer little pictures, they are only put in this book to show Tim and Tom (and you, of course) the kind of Inklings almost any pen will draw when dipped in



INDIA INKLINGS



INDIA INKLINGS

I

ONLY A BLOT

NOBODY dared tell the baby's father! The grandmother said that as for her she simply couldn't and wouldn't.

"Then *you* do it!" said the Old Aunt.

"No, no! You're oldest, you tell him," urged the Youngest Aunt.

Whereupon all the in-between aunts and cousins and neighbors wagged their heads sympathetically. Here was a fix, indeed: who would tell the father that he *was* a father? For plainly, nobody wanted to! So the little new baby obligingly settled the dreadful question by lifting up its brand-new voice and wailing as loud as it could, which was surprisingly louder than any one dreamed it would be, considering how inexperienced the baby was at howling. In fact, it was such an altogether satisfactory howl that it reached the ears of Devidas, the father, as he came sauntering down the street under the cocoanut palm-trees, and he hurried indoors with his face beaming.

"Ah!" he called. "Did I not hear the voice of a little son calling me?"

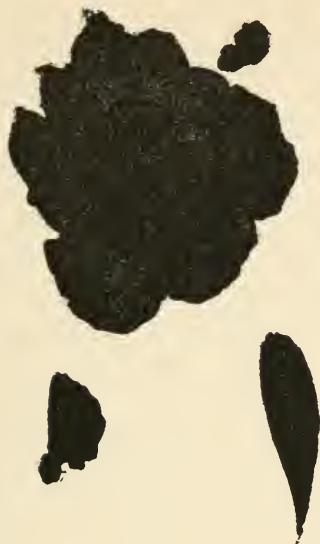
"Salaam, oh, lord and master," quailed the Old Aunt, wringing her poor brown hands, "we have bad news to break to you; for your son is a daughter, alas! alas!"

He could hardly believe his ears. "A d-daughter?" he stammered. "But how could the gods send me a *daughter*, woman? Surely not after I have spent all those many rupees on that rich feast for the temple priests—and after all those other rupees I gave to repair the idol car—and those sumptuous offerings of food at the shrines—"

"Alas! Alas!" groaned the aunts and cousins and neighbors in a dismal chorus, wagging their heads in utter discouragement.

One glance at their sorry looks convinced him that the longed-for son was indeed a daughter, so he scowled at them each and all. "Leave me alone!" he ordered in his sternest voice; they meekly backed out of the room. But the baby, who did not yet understand this business of being so meek and disappearing in silence, wailed a still louder wail than before—as if to say: "There, father! Better than the last one, wasn't it? I should think you'd be pretty proud of a child who can howl like this when only two hours old!"

But Devidas was not proud at all; he was too much upset. Presently he went out and told all his relatives how upset he was—a girl, bah! Didn't his youngest brother have a son already, the bright little Manikam? Well, he wanted a son, too. Daughters were worse than nothing. Yes, the relatives wagged their heads; daughters hardly counted.



In case you have no Inkling as yet about this business of being "only a blot," you will soon find out how conspicuously inconvenient it was for Devidas—and Machamma, too!

Then he went to the temple to tell the priests, and they agreed that it was really too bad, but if he had only bought ghee to pour over the idols. . . .

"Ghee?" groaned the almost bankrupt father. "Why I *did* buy melted butter, sirs, don't you remember?"

Oh, so he had. Well, it was too bad. But the gods were probably displeased with him, otherwise it should certainly have been a son, after all the trouble he had taken.

All this time the baby was still practicing wails—up and up the scale she soared, oh! if she had only been a *quiet* baby! But in that case this book might never have been written, for it is a fact that when she was noisiest, her grandmother said: "My poor Devidas, what will you name your little un-wanted child?" and he answered in great disgust: "What do I care what she's called, she's nothing but a blot. To-day I had dealings with a merchant, and while I was waiting I plainly saw him dip his pen in ink and start to do the thing called writing, when lo! a splash of ink dropped on the paper. '*Macha!*' he cried. 'Blot! It is no good,' and he flung it aside, choosing a fresh sheet. Well, this undesirable is also a blunder, not fit to be counted in the family."

So "Blot" she was called, although in the language of India it sounds rather lovelier, I think: *Machamma*; but you will soon see that being a Blot feels the same in any language. Rather an uncomfortable "feel"!

But have you noticed how the Lord God has put something into even heathen mothers' hearts which makes them love an awkward, lonely child the very

best of all? So Pitchamma, her mother, loved Machamma in secret, and tried patiently to teach her quiet ways and gentle habits, so that she might not disturb that Man of Wrath, her father. But you only need to look at the blot in this book to see that although it never says a single word, yet every time you turn the page *there it is!* Quiet, perhaps, but, oh! so conspicuously noticeable. Thus, every time he came indoors, Devidas saw Machamma, and wished he knew some easy plan for getting rid of her. Which, you must admit, was not a very cheerful way to start being a baby!

But Machamma made the best of it. Indeed, she was bubbling over with such delightful little secrets of her own that it was a year or two before it dawned on her what a blot she was; you see, the first year there were her ten fascinating brown toes to be counted over and over again; or, lying on her back, there were the thousand tickly flies to play with while they buzzed and buzzed and buzzed the drowsiest of lullabies. Then the second year she was very busy exploring this queer place she lived in, with its mud walls and its straw roof and cracks in its earthen floor where grains of rice and corn had fallen once upon a time, and still lay wedged for little brown fingers to pry loose. Not a nook nor a cranny was there into which Machamma did not creep, except alas! into her father's heart, for she had already begun to discover the truth about the blot business, so that by the time she reached the Mud-Pie-Age she would drop even the fattest and

most bewitching of these little pies and scoot pell-mell to hide in the folds of her mother's saree when she heard him coming. Yet all on account of a mud pie, she . . . but that is another story!

II

THE STORY THAT ENDS TWICE

THERE is this to be said about mud pies: you simply cannot make them successfully out of plain dust. The dust needs to be properly wet; and in India there is not a drop of rain for nine months of the year—this was one of those dry-season months, yet here was Machamma wanting more than anything else to make pies, but altogether hindered because there was no wetness anywhere. Even the big clay water pots stood empty. But she knew where there *was* water: indeed, the most fascinating water in town!

It stood in a tiny corked vase up on the god-shelf, with the row of painted idols, and there was a story about it, although she never properly understood why any one should go to so much trouble for such a very little bit of water. Why not dip up all you wanted from the village well right here at home? But it seems that once upon a time her grandfather had wanted to find peace. They tell you in India that the best possible way to find peace is to go off on a search for it, so he went on a very long pilgrimage, with all his rupees and annas (Indian coins) tied into a corner of his turban. When he left, Machamma was only a baby; when he returned, she was three years old—and from the stories he told Machamma knew there could hardly be one temple in all India where he did

Blot Plunges into Deep Trouble 23



Here is an inkling about a sad *sprinkling* that made a mud pie and plunged our little Blot into deep trouble!

not stop to worship, seeking peace, and giving an anna to the priest so that the idol might be awakened.

For idols, it seems, although carved from wood or stone to sit motionless from one year's end to the other, sometimes go off on spirit journeys; or—even with eyes staring wide open—they take naps. What would be the good of traveling weary miles to worship them if they took no notice? But priests who live in temples understand the ways of idols, and for a little money they will beat a gong to recall the gods from their journeys or arouse them from their slumbers. You can see what an expensive thing this continual rousing would be to a grandfather absent from home for two years, and how one by one every coin tied up in his turban would be given away. But by that time he had reached the River Ganges; and the River Ganges is like no other water on earth. Every inch of it is sacred, the Hindus will tell you; every drop of it is holy. People who bathe in it lose all their sins, and people who die on its banks go straight to Nirvana.

You may be sure that Machamma's grandfather bathed in it (with ten thousand other pilgrims!) and it occurred to him that if he only took some Ganges water home with him his troubles would be over. So he filled a little vase, and started all those weary miles toward home. Villagers along the route treated him with marvelous respect, for had he not been at the *Ganges*? And was he not, therefore, blessed of the gods? They gave him curry and rice for his meals, and asked leave to touch his precious vase, for per-

haps this might be the nearest they would ever come to gaining peace.

And it was this very vase of water at which the thoughtless Machamma stood gazing wistfully on the day when her mud pies proved mudless. How she did wish she were taller! She stood on tiptoe and stretched out her little brown arm as high as it would reach, but the god-shelf was still higher. There are ways of growing tall-in-a-minute, however; and the quickest of these is to stand on something.

Families in India who sit on the floor with their legs tucked under them do not have chairs or tables in their homes, of course; but there is generally a basket somewhere. Machamma found one and dragged it directly under the shelf. Climbing on top, she reached for that just-too-high vase. Girls who are blots really should not do such things, but Machamma, alas! was most successful in her grasping, and presently went pattering out-of-doors to make the most delightful mud you ever saw.

"I won't use all the water right away," said she to herself, like a very economical housekeeper. "I'll make it *last*!" So she dabbled and puddled and patted a quaint little shape, with such complete forgetting of everything else that it was just as if she were alone in a world without people. Whereas all the time some one was coming nearer step by step. Some one who thought she was only a blot was provoked to find a blot having such a blissful time,—humming, I declare! Some one who looked a little closer gave a gasp of astonishment, then a roar of rage . . . and the first

thing poor Machamma knew, she was not feeling alone in the world at all, for some one was shaking her so violently that the palm-trees seemed to dance a dizzy jig before her eyes and her teeth rattled noisily against each other.

"You horrible child! You wretch of a girl—where did you get that sacred vase? Speak up! Are you daft? Are you brainless? Tell me."

It was hardly sensible of Devidas to shake her quite so hard and then expect an answer, for Machamma was too busy catching her breath to manage a sentence.

"You provoking little baggage! You girl-nuisance! Speak—is this indeed my father's sacred vase of holy Ganges water?"

Machamma choked out a few words: "All t-t-t-that's l-l-l-left, b-but I'll f-f-fill it f-f-from t-the w-w-well again, f-father."

"Fill it with *ordinary village water?*" gasped her outraged father. "You're crazy!" And such really dreadful things happened to her then that surely you will not care to hear how heathen fathers treat their little heathen daughters; but the bruises on Machamma's arm could tell a story, the tears in Machamma's eyes could tell a story,—to me those tears seem far more precious than that dirty stagnant water from the Ganges; so I am glad that after all the awfulness was over, there was Machamma's mother to creep in on tiptoe and gather the little girl in her arms: "Oh, little Apple-of-My-Eye, how couldst thou do this foolishness? Have I not told thee often not to touch their

things? To keep out of their way? Oh, my little Jar-of-Milk-and-Honey, did they hurt thee? Thy mother feels that hurting, also!"

The little Jar-of-Milk-and-Honey clung to those dear arms; oh, I really do not know what little heathen girls would do if God had not made mothers loving . . .

But all this time a solemn family conference was going on about Machamma's mud pie. Grandfather said how could it be just a mud pie any more, now that it was mixed with sacred water? So the first thing anybody knew he and his sons went to see the village idol maker.

"There is a thought in my head," said grandfather, "that from mud like this you could make us a god."

"W-well," hesitated the man who made idols, "of course I *might*. It is not a thing I ever did before, however—to use other people's mud! But I can see that this is not ordinary earth any longer. It will cost you many rupees, but I don't suppose mere money makes a difference to troubled heads like yours."

"Money makes a great deal of difference," Machamma's uncles replied in a scandalized chorus. "We are poor. We have little rice for our stomachs. We have many mouths to feed. How much will you charge?"

You should have heard the bickering and bargaining!

"That fellow is trying to take the very eyebrows off our faces!" sighed Devidas.

"He will drive us to drown in the well!" cried Manikam's father.

"He thinks we are rich Brahmans!" sneered grandfather.

"Not much," snapped the idol-maker, and spat on the ground in disgust. "You want such a cheap idol it will do you no good! Take your mud elsewhere, I beg you."

Then every one suddenly noticed a thing they should have thought of before. The mud was no longer mud! All by itself it had dried into the shape Machamma had made—her funny little pie was now baked as hard as could be by the heat of India.

"In that case, of course," said the idol-maker, shrugging his shoulders, "I should have to wet it all over again with more Ganges water in order to mold it anew."

"Impostor! Cheat! Sly dog!" gasped grandfather. "Do you think I would trust you with my few remaining drops of water? I must save them for the time when I die! But I see your craftiness, you who have never traveled all those weary miles would set aside my Ganges water for yourself and use ordinary liquid in molding us an idol! I see your plot! I know you! Come, my sons, let us be gone—we dare not trust the little that remains in that vase to any mortal."

"True!" said Machamma's father.

"Wise, indeed!" said Manikam's father.

"Sensible!" agreed the other sons.

"But what to do with the mud pie?" worried grandfather.

"Put it on the god-shelf, of course," Devidas suggested. And at sunset time those six grown men

walked down the village street carrying that silly little cake of earth; but it was a serious thing to them—for there was water in that earth which had taken two long years of pilgrimage to gain. A little slice of grandfather's "peace" was lost in it; so up on the shelf it went, elbowing the painted idols; and down in grandfather's heart was a sense of worship toward it and every morning granny laid a flower before it, or a little rice. So that it was almost as if Machamma had brought them a new god!

But this story ends *twice*; and by and by you shall hear of another God whom Machamma also brought home to them: a very real God, not made of mud or daubed with paint. Yet in the weary meantime Machamma lies whimpering in the corner, for bruises hurt, and this little maker of images does not dream that she will ever be a Voice crying in the wilderness: "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God."

III

WHEN MANIKAM MINDED HIS MOTHER

MACHAMMA crouched in a corner and looked at her cousin Manikam with the roundest eyes in India. For Manikam would not do the thing his mother ordered. Manikam never minded his mother. Boys weren't expected to! Oh, how grand it must be to thrash around with your arms hitting everybody in sight and shouting: "I won't! I won't! I won't! I won't go near that dreadful big thing. I won't hang a wreath of marigolds around its neck. They are *paper* marigolds, anyway. I won't go! I won't! I won't! I won't light the incense stick—I *won't!*"

"Just listen to this fine little grandson of mine," said granny. "None of my own sons ever showed such a fine spirit."

"None of them ever got his own way like Manikam does," snickered the Old Aunt gleefully. "Look at the bruise he made on my arm! He's a fine strong boy. A big brave boy."

All the in-between aunts began chanting a sing-song chorus: "Manikam is brave—he knows he is his mother's oldest son—he knows he does not have to mind her—oldest sons never mind their mothers—they are brave—they know that some day she will have to mind *them!*"

Even down in her safe corner Machamma shuddered.

Suppose he should come near her with those fists! But oh, how grand to be a boy and get your own way! How often Pitchamma had whispered to her little daughter that if she would only be very, very good all her life the gods might turn her into a boy when she died. Think of coming back to the earth as a *boy*. To be born again as a *boy*. No wonder all the girls were wishing it! Boys were always right. They had their own way. They bossed the women around. They did not mind grannies or Old Aunts. The more noise they made and the crosser they grew, the more people said: "Splendid boy! A son to be proud of! A son to brag about in the market-place!"

Quite different from being a Blot, thought Ma-chamma. A silent, tongue-tied Blot!

Then into this scene of Manikam's noise came grandfather. Things quieted down. Every one stood stock-still.

"What is this all about?" asked grandfather.

Manikam strutted up and down the room, waving a disgusted hand: "These women keep plaguing me to go to the temple. They want me to worship the idol. I will *not* worship that idol. He stares at me with big white eyes. He grins at me with big red lips. He has big strong fingers. He towers way up in the air. He is dreadful to look at! I do not want to hang a wreath of marigolds around his neck. I won't go near him!"

Grandfather winked his eye at the Old Aunt: "That's the way to talk! But don't you know that idol is just *wood*? He can't move his strong fingers to grab



You can hardly blame Manikam for not wanting to get near enough to garland this hideous, unlovable idol; cocoanut-throwing was more fun, but unsuccessful, alas!



When Manikam Minded His Mother 35

you. These women have gone the wrong way about urging you, of course. Women have no brains in their heads. But you and I will go to the temple together. We will take some rice on a big green leaf."

"But I am very hungry for that rice myself," groaned Manikam, rubbing his empty stomach.

"Of course you are hungry. Aren't we *all* hungry? Isn't there famine in town? Nobody has enough to eat, for the rains do not come and the crops are dying. Maybe the god is hungry, my boy; maybe he is angry because you never kneel to worship him; maybe he would like it if you garlanded him and prayed: 'Oh, send us food! Send us rain!' He really might send it, you know. You never can tell what will tickle their fancy."

So Manikam minded his mother by minding his grandfather. Boys *had* to mind Indian grandfathers! Manikam marched off carrying the snowy rice on his green leaf. The priest struck a gong which echoed all through the temple, then they went inside. It was dark and gruesome after the blinding sunlight outdoors. In spite of the heat, Manikam shivered. But just as they told him to do, he knelt and laid the rice on the big painted knees of the idol.

"Send us rain! Send us food! Be pleased to send us rain! Be pleased to send us food!" he piped out in a thin little voice that sent cold shudders down his back.

Then he was lifted high up to loop his paper garland around the dreadful wooden neck and to pray into that

mammoth wooden ear: "We beseech thee, hear us! We beseech thee, hear us."

And that was all anybody could do, of course.

But just as he and his grandfather left the temple, he looked over his shoulder to be sure that those evil hands were not clutching at his little bare legs, when lo! he saw a strange sight: *the priest was eating the rice!*

"I wanted that rice myself," Manikam cried. "I am hollow all up and down inside me. Why does he eat it? What will the god do to him? Will he strike him dead?"

"Tut! tut!" mumbled grandfather. "You talk too much. Those silly women spoil you." But he also would have liked the rice. He felt very thin and old and tired. He hoped the god would like to have his priest so plump and well fed from eating everybody's offerings. Of course one never knew what would take an idol's fickle fancy. . . .

Quite evidently it made no difference to them that one small scared boy had hung his garland and gone without his supper. After a rainless week of waiting the priests agreed it would be well to give their god an outing. Perhaps he was bored indoors.

You never saw a stranger sight in all your life: that monstrous doll-like image taking a ride through the streets in a great gold cart. Shining it was! Gleaming it was! Much decorated it was! And drawn by a hundred hot, perspiring Brahmans.

Everybody in town watched it go by, shouting, singing, dancing, praying, surging left and surging right,

When Manikam Minded His Mother 37

yelling, screaming, swarming around the golden wheels, beating their breasts and crying: "Remember us once more! Remember us and save us!"

This was the day when Manikam really did mind his mother.

"Sweet little son," she said, "see—here are two cocoanuts. I was saving them for ourselves, but this is such a grand festival, surely we should please the idol and not ourselves. So take the cocoanuts, lad; and when the cart comes past throw them carefully, aim them directly under the wheels. For if the cocoanuts break, then good luck will be ours!"

Manikam grinned. This was more in his line. "Watch me!" he boasted, and flung the first cocoanut. But it rolled far astray and a Brahman priest picked it up.

"Oh, throw straighter, lad!"

Manikam minded.

Plop! went the second cocoanut—*crash! splash!* It had broken on the wheels.

"Now the idol will send us good luck!" cried grandfather.

"Good luck!" echoed the uncles, all of whom were hungry.

"Good luck!" repeated the aunts, much hungrier than the uncles,—since men eat first in India and women have only their leavings.

"Good luck is on its way to us," chirped Machamma to herself, skipping a feeble little skip of joy, and painting pictures in her mind of the things they would be eating soon, when this famine was over.

But she waited.

And waited.

And *waited!*

The middle aunt fell sick. She died. She was too hungry to wait another minute.

The weather grew sizzling hot. The grass was burned to a cinder. The wells dried up. The pools dried up. The cattle hung their heads, and their tongues lolled out of their mouths pantingly. Everybody seemed to be sick. You never knew in the evening who would be gone by morning. The low-caste people who were hired to beat drums beat them from morning till night to drive away the evil cholera spirits.

It was all people could do to keep the precious Tulsi tree alive.

Manikam was disgusted.

"Where are the gods anyway? Why did they take my rice? Why did they take my cocoanuts? Why don't they *do* something?"

"Alas," sighed granny, "the gods seem to have forgotten us."

"The gods must hate the town of the Twisted Tulsi Tree!" groaned grandfather.

"Maybe they are just off a journey somewhere," sighed Devidas.

"Maybe they are asleep," ventured Pitchamma.

"They are so hard to please," everybody agreed.

"Why are they hard to please?" asked Manikam.

"How can pieces of wood be so cruel?"

"How, indeed! You talk too much," said his father.

"These women have spoiled you. You will never

When Manikam Minded His Mother 39

discover this riddle of the gods—why they delight to plague us and tease us and starve us.”

“Some day I *will* discover that riddle!” boasted Manikam.

Wonderful of him! sighed Machamma. Boys could do anything! Little dreaming that she was going to discover the riddle also.

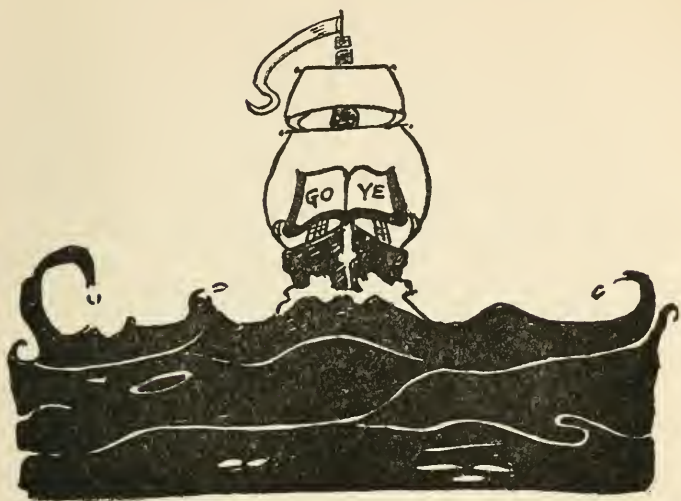
IV.

MY BONNIE LIES OVER THE OCEAN

ALL this time, over in America, there was Bonnie Aunt. Tim and Tom were quite sure that there was no one in the world (except their mother, of course) who was quite as beautiful as Bonnie Aunt: she had golden hair and adorable twinkles like stars in her eyes, and when she laughed she sounded like lovely little bells. Her real name was Anne Laurence, but her friends thought this seemed so much like a quaint old ballad that they called her "Bonnie Annie Laurie," which the twins had shortened into Bonnie Aunt. A very precious person, not at all the kind to be parted from—ever. Yet one very rainy day she came over to see their mother, and although the visit began just as visits should, the first thing anybody knew mother was crying as if her heart would break while Bonnie Aunt kept saying: "Oh, *please* don't take it this way, Dora; I'll be home again in seven years. It won't seem like any time at all!"

Their mother could not agree to this thought, but she dried her eyes and smiled like rainbows after April showers as she said: "You're the bravest, dearest girl in all the world, Annie Laurie, and I'm going to be enormously proud of you!"

All of which was a deep mystery to Tim and Tom, of course; so on the first free moment they cornered



When you were very little and used to hum "My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean," it probably called up in your mind's eye some quaint, old, full-sailed vessel on the deep blue sea. The beautiful part of it is that on every such deep blue sea, for hundreds and hundreds of years, there has always been a ship a-sailing carrying some one on board, like Bonnie Aunt, who has heard the Saviour's *Go Ye*, and has set forth with Bibles and pills to "take a town."



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Bonnie Aunt and put her through a course of questionings.

"You made mother cry!" Tim accused her.

"I know it!" agreed Bonnie Aunt. "But she ended up by smiling."

"Yes, but that was just the kind of smile you smile *outside* when you aren't nearly through crying inside yet. We know, don't we, Tom?"

Tom nodded, and immediately asked: "Where is this place you are going that will take seven years before you get back?"

"Little pitchers have big ears!" she smiled, shaking her finger at him. "Well, my dears, it's a big place called India. Did you ever hear of it?"

"Of course!" cried Tim.

"It's in the geography!" cried Tom.

"Indeed it is, Twinnies. And I suppose you know by this time that places on a map are generally alive with *people*. So I'm going over there to live with some of them."

"The very idea!" Tim reproved her. "Aren't *we* good enough to live with?"

"That's the trouble: you're much, much too good."

Tom chuckled; for it must be admitted that goodness never had seemed his specialty before! But Tim, being a girl, was not nearly so much concerned with her own apparent perfections as with the awful fact that Bonnie Aunt was going somewhere where the people were not good at all. "Will they be dreadfully bad?" she asked breathlessly, with visions of pirates and ogres and villains parading before her mind's eye.

"No," Bonnie Aunt assured her, tenderly, "not *wicked* at all, just very mistaken in all their ways. So we're going over to tell them a better way."

"*We?*" cried Tim, pouncing on that one astonishing little word. "Oh, then you aren't going to India all alone?"

"No, I thought maybe I'd get married!" (And her cheeks were suddenly quite pink.)

Here was news, indeed, to Tim; but Tom skipped over all this nonsense of husbands and weddings, demanding to know exactly what Bonnie Aunt and this husband-person were going to *be* over in India, anyhow.

"I think," said Bonnie Aunt slowly and thoughtfully, "that we will be—soldiers."

Tom looked at her in grave doubt. "But you're only a *lady*, so how can you fight? And do you know how to shoot a gun?"

"Even ladies make passable soldiers," she protested, "and we shan't need guns. You see, we're going to be *Christian* soldiers, the kind you sing about in church: 'Onward, Christian soldiers, marching as to war.' It's a totally different kind of war from that horrible affair in Europe recently. In *our* war, instead of guns we are to use Bibles and pills."

Tom was speechless.

"I think it sounds risky, Bonnie Aunt," Tim said, patting her arm. "Bibles are all right for ministers to get sermons from, and for Sunday-school lessons, but you can't *fight* with them. They're too little and too soft and—"

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Bonnie Aunt reached over to pick up a Bible from the table. "Twinnies," she said, "there isn't a gun in the whole world that can do what this Book does! An ordinary soldier takes his gun, and his captain tells him where to shoot. *Bing!* *Bing!*—and somebody's dead. Or, shoulder to shoulder, a whole regiment of soldiers turn their guns on some little town belonging to the enemy; all day long there is the ceaseless *Boom!* *Boom!* *Boom!* of giant guns, and by nightfall there are smoldering ruins, roofless houses, dead men in the streets, cripples everywhere, a few cowering widows, a few wailing orphans. That's how guns 'take a town,' isn't it?"

The twins nodded their two heads and stared with their four spellbound eyes.

"Well, we're being sent over the ocean by *our* Captain to 'take a town,' too. But we're going to *love* it into surrendering! Love it with Bibles and pills, till the widows and orphans and cripples are well and whole and happy. We shall need to start a little church and a little school and a little hospital. Oh, I expect we shall be very busy making ourselves go around into all the places where they will need us!"

"Somehow, you seem too little and golden to go so far away," Tim cried, still patting the precious arm.

"They mustn't go hurting you, off there!" Tom growled in a let-me-catch-them-trying-it sort of voice.

"Oh, they won't," Bonnie Aunt assured him. "I think they will find, deep down in their hearts, that they are hungry for my Book."

So in the course of time there was the prettiest wed-

ding ever held in that city, with the organ thundering forth "Here Comes the Bride" and the bridesmaids in prim yellow dresses and the bride all shimmering white,—very, very happy.

"Not a bit like a soldier, though," thought Tom with some misgivings; but fortunately the groom looked strong enough for two. Since he was the only uncle the twins had ever had, they decided he was going to prove a good investment! Although his idea of a honeymoon was like nothing Tim had ever heard of before. For imagine the bridegroom spending his first six months as an interne in a New York hospital, riding in ambulances to accidents, at everybody's beck and call from morning till night!

"What will Bonnie Aunt be doing with herself all that time?"

"Now don't you go worrying about that young lady's feeling lonesome, my dears! She's planning to cram her nice little head so full of new ideas that I'm in grave danger of being crowded out of her memory: she's going to study in a Bible Training School all morning, take a Home Nursing course all afternoon, and finish off the day by attending sociological-philanthropic-social-service lectures all evening. . . ."

"Oh, my!" breathed the twins in a weak duet.

"Exactly!" agreed the groom, very solemnly. "Fancy having any one so wondrous wise in the family! It's a compliment none of us deserve."

"I think," said Tim, bashfully, "that you probably know a lot yourself, only you don't let on!"

"Hear! Hear!" cried the new uncle. "Just for

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that, I will send you an elephant as soon as ever I get to India."

"A *big* one?" Tom inquired anxiously.

"Betwixt and between, sir! And now I really think this poor bridegroom ought to shake hands with the departing wedding guests."

As he strode away, Tim sighed: "I think he's going to be an awfully suitable uncle for us."

"Suitable?" sniffed Tom. "Why he's—he's—*perfect*!"

• • • • •
Six months later, all the Laurences went to New York to see "My Bonnie go over her ocean." But this is part of the story to be skipped, for the grown-up part of the family were crying, Tim detested the shrill whistles shrieking on Bonnie Aunt's ship, Tom thought it a mean shame that he could not be a sailor then and there. (A ship seen near-to was too wonderful to leave!) Altogether it was not a pleasant day, and when the left-behind part of the family boarded the train that would carry them back to their home in Ohio, Mrs. Laurence was glad that the twins had discovered a game which could last all day. A game called "Steeple."

Of course they had always known that there were church spires in their own city. With two good eyes you were sure to notice one on any walk you chose to take. But they had not realized that America was such a land-of-spires until their train went flying westward. Tom sat on one side of the car, Tim on the other, counting; and it is a fact that in almost every

place they dashed through Tim would call: "My town has a steeple! A white one, Tom." "That's nothing," Tom called back, "there's one on my side of the track, too."

Steeple never seemed to fail! Except in one small town where not a spire was visible. Tom never quite forgave that town for being on *his* side, especially as Tim said that if it had been on her side there would have had to be a steeple, or she'd know the reason why! (As if she could have stepped off the train and built one then and there!)

"Mother, it's the only place in all America that has no church, I guess," Tom said. "Why don't they?"

"Perhaps they meet in the schoolhouse on Sundays," she suggested. Then when it grew too dark to count steeples, the twins sat down beside her and asked a few questions: Why were there spires? What were they for?

"I think," said Mrs. Lawrence, "that spires towering up in the sky are God's exclamation points—like this:

! ! ! ! ! ! ! ! ! ! ! ! !
and the thing they cry to men is: 'Watch! Look! Listen!' Half the people are so busy doing their own things that they bustle past and never notice steeples or think of God at all; probably that is why some churches hang a bell up in their spires, ringing it one day in seven:

*'Ding-dong,
Is something wrong?
Come here,
God's near!'*

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So some people go to sit in the pews, while others stay home. Or perhaps there's a light in the steeple to remind us all through the night that God Himself is light and that we must carry our church to those who sit in darkness, just as Bonnie Aunt is carrying it over the ocean this very minute."

"*Carrying our church?* Oh, mother, how could she? The steeple would surely have toppled over and spilled all along the railroad track long before it reached the ocean, and it weighs such tons and tons it surely would sink the ship!"

"Silly!" laughed Tom. "You don't mean the stone-and-brick church, do you, mother?"

She shook her head. "A church is the love and the service of God in the hearts of a group of Christians! And love can go anywhere; and service can be tied up in very little bundles! You could even tie it up yourselves to mail to India."

"How?" they questioned eagerly.

"Scrapbooks," she answered, ticking the things off on her fingers, "old postals with fresh paper pasted over the used part; little dressed dolls that button and unbutton; pencils; pads; pins; oh, a dozen little happy things—"

"We'd love to!"

"We could get our friends to help!"

"We could have a Box Party!"

"We could buy things with our birthday money!"

"We could *earn* money by collecting old newspapers to sell to the ragman!"

"We could have a little fair!"

Even the colored porter had an inkling of the fun this was going to be, for as he turned their seats into amusing little beds behind green curtains he said, grinning: "I 'spect dat lady am gwine ter git a powerful monstrous box! I reckon dey'll jess have ter charter one of dem freight steamers ter fetch it over de ocean, 'deed dey will!"

V

ONE TO BEGIN, TWO TO MAKE READY, AND THREE TO GO!

DEAR TWINNIES,

*"The time has come," the walrus said,
 "To talk of many things—
 Of ships and sails and sealing-wax
 And cabbages and kings,
 And why the sea is boiling hot,
 And whether pigs have wings—"*

I don't know about winged pigs, my dears, but now that at last your Bonnie lies over the ocean she could write volumes on ships and sails and sealing-wax (to fasten us on deck, of course), and when we skimmed through the Red (Hot!) Sea we *knew* it was boiling! Then came two dreadful days when the winds blew the waves mountain-high and hollowed them out valley-deep, so that the front end of our boat knocked down the stars while the back end plunged straight through to Kalamazoo. Very unexpected, and I should have worried more about it only in another two days we were on dry land. And, oh, my dears, India is a dry land! Not a drop of rain ever falls for nine months of the year, anyhow; and this year it skipped the other three months also.

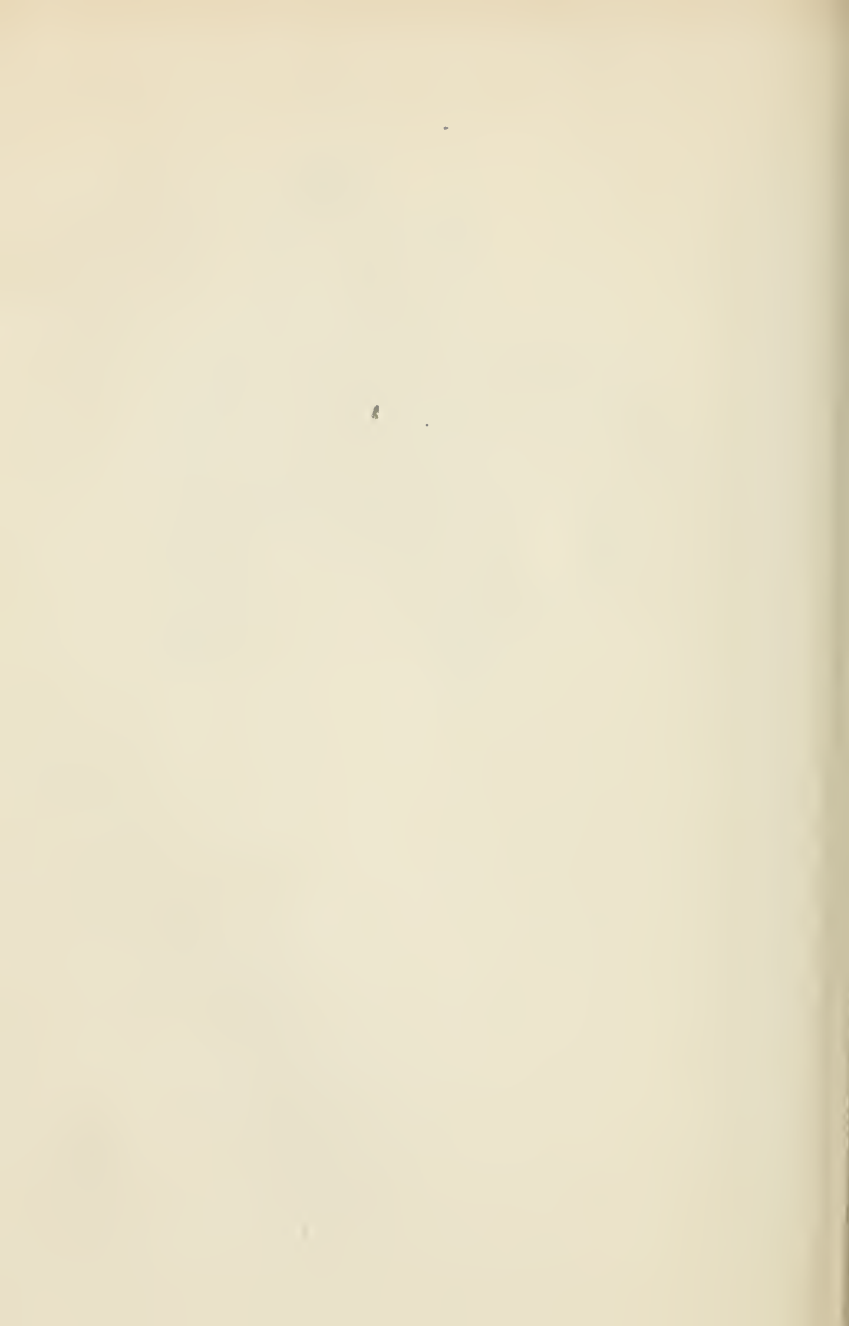
It is such a *brown* land that we are glad the brown people wear such bright colors, the men in gaudy turbans—big bulby affairs—look for all the world like

giant tulips marching around a garden. The little brown ladies wear sarees draped and looped around them without a pin or a button anywhere. It worries me! For every other minute they have to loop themselves in place all over again, then reloop, then re-reloop, then re-re-reloop, etc., all day long. Their little tinkling bracelets and necklaces and anklets look charming; but what would you say to an ear-ring dangling from your *nose*? The little brown children seem to wear nothing at all, maybe a bead or two; but it's so hot, and they don't need much.

And what do you suppose we two big grown-ups are doing? Learning to read and write, of course! Every blessed morning we rise with the sun; about seven o'clock our school begins. The politest munshi (teacher) in a huge scarlet turban comes in salaaming—that's the way to say How do you do? in India; instead of shaking hands, touch your right hand gracefully against your forehead and say "Salaam!" I love it! Also it's the one remark I'm sure of saying properly. Our munshi tucks his legs under him and very solemnly seats himself on the floor, while his school seat themselves upon two chairs and look down very solemnly at "Teacher." New languages are the slipperiest things to learn—you think you have that nice little new word pigeonholed ready to use, but when you hurry for it, there's just the hole. I'm *all* hole! Your new uncle is quite at the head of our school, I assure you; but then I'm always next to the head. (Please don't say I have to be, since there are only two scholars.)



Here
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see almost any day in India!



The quicker we learn the language, the quicker we can begin doing the big work waiting for us to do in that dear little village somewhere to which we shall be assigned. I read the other day that "if a missionary had begun to visit the villages of India on the day Christ was born, and had preached the gospel in one village each day from then until now, he would not yet have reached but *half* the villages!" So you see why we are eager to begin, for there are only 5,000 of us missionaries for 300,000,000 persons; if you do a little sum in long division you will discover that this gives each missionary 600,000 persons to reach. That is twice as big as the city you live in! So I haven't a minute to lose, have I? Your busy, loving

Bonnie Aunt.

.
Salaam, oh, Tim, oh, Tom!

It is raining like cats and dogs (a kitten and a puppy have just landed on the window-sill!) and all India is sighing with relief that eighteen months of drought are ended. Yesterday there didn't seem to be a drop in sight, and we had our first (maybe our last) elephant ride. Your brave and valiant aunt prefers the wildest storm ever brewed on the Atlantic-Mediterranean-Red-or-any-other-sea! But personally I thought elephant-eering rather tame sport.

The only peculiar part is getting on board the wee, modest, timid, little beastie. Even with his legs neatly folded under him he towers up into the air like a young mountain, so we had to provide a stepladder to reach the little veranda-affair on his back. Very cozy

we all felt, wedged into that howdah like pieces of a picture puzzle. Then the driver said G'dap. And the elephant g'dapped! He had to begin doing it with his hind legs first, so we all lurched forward rather wildly. Your aunt had visions of herself plunging into mid-air, so she threw her arms around the neck of the very proper English lady who was giving us the ride. A Duchess she was, too! Imagine being so familiar right away; but she was very nice about being choked, even though Bonnie Aunt could not be persuaded to release the Duchess until the elephant had unfolded all his remaining legs, lurching us to all points of the compass. When he was finally all "up," Bonnie Aunt freed our hostess and was so mortified to have choked a Duchess nearly to death (they are getting scarce, too) that she made matters worse by saying she had supposed she was strangling *me*! Missionary doctors are even scarcer than duchesses, and a bit more important, I think.

I sent you an elephant to-day; hoping he may prove satisfactory to all parties concerned, I am

Your affectionate uncle,

Harry.

Mr. William B. Laurence, D.O.O.U.

Dear Will: I have been so busy for several months that letters have been impossible, but this brief note is to inform you, sir, that you now belong to the Distinguished Order of Uncles, sir; your new nephew having arrived two days ago and looking so exactly like you that we instantly named him William Laurence

Drake. A very healthy youngster with such a remarkable voice that we think he is destined to make a better missionary than either of us. In another three months we think the new Billy II. will be transportable to whatever village we are assigned, so it will literally be a case of One to Begin, Two to Make Ready, and *Three* to Go.

Will write more later. Love to all of you from us.

Cordially yours,

Henry Drake.

.
Dear Tim and Tom,

You deserve a letter in reply to the fine ones you sent me, so here goes! I could even write you in this new language, only you would never know what I was saying. Sometimes the people here don't, either! The other day I thought I asked a coolie to carry a trunk upstairs at once, whereat his brown skin turned quite pale because I had recklessly mixed several sets of words and had asked him to spank the punkah boy immediately. He hated to do it. He begged my pardon for refusing. "I am only a poor coolie," he pleaded, "but it will make trouble, Sahib, much trouble." Calmly I reviewed my beautiful sentence, and calmly I assured him he was entirely proper in his attitude. I had made a slip. "Ah!" said he to me; but what he said to the punkah boy in private I dare not think.

You will be wondering who the punkah boy is. All day long he sits and pulls a rope. The rope pulls a fan (punkah) in the ceiling. The fan moves the air.

The air cools the missionaries. Otherwise we might sizzle! The "boy" part of his name is only for looks, as our host's punkah boy is a very old man who can go to sleep as easily as Billy II. Whenever the fan stops blowing, we know that the old fellow is snoozing again. Bonnie Aunt never lets me wake him. "He looks so awfully tired!" she always pleads.

"And I'm so awfully warm!" I sigh. So we debate his fate: to sleep or not to sleep, that is the question.

"When I get my *own* little house in that little town of ours I intend to have a very young and nimble punkah-puller, whom we can rouse with a clear conscience," she says. And I second the motion.

Which brings me to the question of servants. Did you ever hear anybody in America say that missionaries are lazy, extravagant creatures with dozens of servants? Sit on anybody who says it. Sit on them *hard*! And after they are properly crushed tell them the reason why missionaries do have several servants. *They have to!!* They have to have a separate servant to do all the different things that must be done: a cook to cook, a sweeper (bunghia) to sweep, a dhoti to wash the clothes, a mali to work in the garden, a bhisti to carry the water from the well, a somebody else to do every separate task. "Expensive!" wail the critics?

Sit on them again, Twinnies. Tell them that wages are only a few cents a day so that the punkah boy + the bunghia + the dhoti + the mali + the bhisti + the cook + the everybody else = $\frac{1}{2}$ less than *one* maid-of-all-work in America! For instance, your mother pays your laundress \$3.60 a day; we pay our washerman-

dhobi 5 cents a day. So *bang* goes the extravagance of us!

"I still don't see why they have to have so *many*!" grumble the critics. Sit on them, Tim. Sit on them, Tom. Look very wise and answer pityingly: "Don't you really and truly know? It's on account of *caste*, of course."

"Indeed!" gasp the critics, who will soon not have a leg left to stand on, "I don't see what caste has to do with it."

"Don't you?" smiles Tom.

"Really?" smiles Tim. "Caste is religion turned upside-down and wrong-side-out. And this is what our uncle tells us:"

That the Hindu religion teaches that all human beings once came from the god Brahma; the Brahman caste sprang from his head, so of course they are highest of all peoples and do no menial work; then from Brahma's hands and feet and the rest of his body came all the lesser castes. (Over 2,000 of them!) And each caste must do one special thing: was your great-grandfather a sweeper? Then the god Brahma intended grandfather to be a sweeper also; and later, your father had no choice, he too must be a sweeper; as for you, *of course* you've got to be a sweeper or else disgrace the family and displease the gods. What? you think sweeping is a horrid dusty occupation? No doubt; but caste is caste, a sweeper is a sweeper. Always has been; always will be. The gods have spoken it! Who is man to change things? Moreover when a sweeper-man marries he must marry

a sweeper-woman. And the goldsmith families dare not eat a meal with the lowly sweeper families; and the farmer folk—though lowly—never go to dinner with the sweepers either. So two thousand separate castes divide all India in little cliques and factions, weavers may not marry carpenters, nor potters marry water-carriers, gardeners may not dine with washer-men, and so it goes, with the lordly Brahmans worshiped by the others. Each caste lives in a palem, or on separate streets; but in the Brahman streets no out-caste man must go, since even the shadow of such “untouchables” falling on Brahman food or Brahman drinking water would instantly spoil it for use. Poor outcastes! There are about fifty million of them, too wretched to belong to any caste at all. They live outside the village walls in poverty you never dreamed of.

So now you know why Indian servants may do only *one* thing and why we can’t employ a Jack-of-all-trades or a maid-of-all-work. *There are none!* Except a few new Christians to whom Bibles and pills and love have brought a kinder religion.

Aren’t you glad we’re here and learning the ropes as fast as can be?

Your busy Uncle Harry.

.
You dear “Run-About” Tim and “Fun-About” Tom, Billy and I thought we would get out the India Ink-bottle and drop you an inkling or two this morning. His part was cooing and gurgling at every word and trying to pick them up before they dried. This was so hard on the letter that his ayah came in and picked

him up! An ayah is an Indian nurse. Billy's is a dear brown saint, who has already brought up two other families of missionary children, so she has a way with white babies that is truly marvelous. Billy reels long sentences at her in his toothless language and she knows exactly what he means, which is more than Dr. and Mrs. Henry Drake know. In two months when we move to our precious little *own* town ("Town of the Twisted Tulsi Tree," it's called) the ayah will come with us to care for Billy.

To-day I went to call on the loveliest Hindu lady. All in a turquoise blue silk saree she was (gold-bordered), with a pink silk underjacket, and a lavender veil over her head—a *dream!* And jewels enough to fill a store. They flashed and flamed and sparkled, until I thought she was the most ravishing lady in the world. But in five minutes I discovered she had never been outside her zenana walls, had never learned to read or write, had been married when she was twelve, and was bored to death at the age of nineteen.

"What do you do with yourself?" I asked.

"In the morning I sit on the blue pillows," she said, "and in the afternoon on the green pillows." It sounded very stupid. I think I was one of the most exciting things that had ever happened to her: my *hair* and my clothes and my hat. Yet I was shocked to find that after I left, she would undoubtedly have to have all those lovely garments laundered and take a bath herself in order to purify herself against my "contaminating presence." You see, your Bonnie Aunt

is really an outcaste, an "untouchable" in her haughty eyes!

Speaking of zenanas, I hope you are not like the poor English globe-trotter who said in despair: "Where is this famous place every one talks about called Zenana? I can't find it on a map or in the time-table!" Ignorant man, little he dreams that no man ever gets into a zenana except a husband or near relative, since it is the women's part of a high caste home—"curtain women" they are called because they must hide behind the purdah (curtain). Do you wonder I say "run-about" Tim and "fun-about" Tom? For freedom and fun are two of the things we hope to bring to our little Town of the Twisted Tulsi Tree. We count the days till we can go! Lovingly,

Bonnie Aunt.

VI

GUESS AGAIN

ONE day there was the greatest possible commotion in the Town of the Twisted Tulsi Tree. The news was spread from one end to the other that people who were white-all-over had come in a bullock cart that morning. They had come to *live!* One of them was a "she," but you ought to see her hair! Something curiously sad had happened to it, so that all the proper blackness had washed away, leaving it gold color. Had anybody ever heard of gold hair before? Nobody had. They could not believe their ears, and hurried to poke their heads inside the doorway of the house: there "she" was, just as the news had said—skin all faded, hair astonishingly gold, even her eyes impossibly colored. Weren't eyes always brown? Of course! And oh, the things she had on for clothes! Most amusing. *Poor woman.*

"What do you call those things on your feet?" somebody asked.

"Shoes," explained the obliging newcomer. The least you could say about her was that she was pleasant, although what with visitors and stray dogs and pecking hens meandering around she was interrupted a dozen times a minute

"What's that thing for?" some one else asked as the man-person unwrapped a four-legged wooden creature.

"It's a chair," explained the pale gold lady, and smilingly sat down on it to show how sit-able chairs are! Much wagging of heads among the uninvited guests; they could not imagine why any one should want to perch midway between the floor and the roof, they had supposed that floors were plenty good enough to sit on, with legs tucked underneath—possibly a mat, if your saree was new. Indeed, there seemed to be no end to the amusements to be seen in this house of the white sahibs! Everybody came to call, not only once that first day, but as often as they could manage a visit in between times.

"We seem destined to be popular!" the gentleman remarked in English, mopping his brow.

"Harry, just suppose they keep on being so curious! How can I be pleasant forever when they muss everything and pick everything up and track dust everywhere and watch every littlest move I make!"

"Oh, yes, you can! You're managing beautifully. This is what we came for, anyway: to be looked at and talked over and—fallen in love with! I can sympathize with them, for I felt the same insane interest in you when I first saw you, myself!"

Just as she was twinkling one of her delightful smiles at him, new heads poked around the doorway and another avalanche of the same old questions was sprung on her: how old was she? was her hair real? was this her husband? didn't it *hurt* to be white-all-over? did her husband ever beat her? No! Well, wasn't she a lucky woman? Had she any children? Oh, one son! Where was he? why did she wear such

Bonnie Aunt Unpacks Her Goods 65

If ever any people had new *Thinklings*, it was on the day when Bonnie Aunt unpacked her household goods; for who in the Town of the Twisted Tulsi Tree had an Inkling that human beings needed such peculiar things as—





a lot of clothes in such warm weather? what were all the seeds for up and down the front of her clothes? buttons? what were they for? could you see out of blue eyes as well as out of brown eyes? how old was she? did her husband have another wife? no! how lovely! didn't those things on her feet pinch horribly? did they come off? What—*every* night? why only at night? why wear them in the day-time? what were they good for? could this little son of mine have this little round silver thing? no! the lady says no, Metaya!

Over and over and over the same astonished questions until Bonnie Aunt became rather rattled and found herself saying that chairs were meant to sleep on, pillows were very good to eat, knives and forks were used in writing. If all the little girls would come to her school to-morrow she would soon show them what she meant. Hadn't they known that girls *could* read? But, of course, they could. As well as boys!

Deeply mystified, the callers sauntered home discussing these new arrivals. One by one the great silver stars pricked through the darkness of the evening sky, and the Drakes looked at each other, tired but laughing.

"What?" he said, "are we alone?"

"We seem to be!" she answered softly. Then they went to the doorway to look up at the same stars that Tim and Tom had seen so short a while before, and Bonnie Aunt whispered:

*"Starlight, star bright,
Hear the wish I wish to-night."*

"Tell me the wish," begged Dr. Drake.

"Ah, but you know it, for you're wishing it, too!"

So a few minutes later they went in to have the first family prayers that were ever prayed to the Saviour in the Town of the Twisted Tulsi Tree.

And that was their first day.

The second was so much like it that it was really impossible to get settled at all, while starting school was out of the question. But Bonnie Aunt talked about school every time she had a chance (there were dozens and dozens of chances, too!) until mothers everywhere went home to discuss this startling news with the village fathers. One of the women who talked it over, said pleadingly:

"Oh, master, the new white woman says she can teach little girls to read and write! Would it not please you to let Machamma try this new thing?"

Devidas put back his head and laughed.

Grandfather put back *his* head and laughed.

The uncles put back *their* heads and laughed.

Then all of them looked at the little Blot whose hands were clasped beseechingly.

"What?" sneered Devidas, "teach *her* to read?"

"Girls have no brains," said grandfather; "I have lived to be an old man and I never knew a woman with brains."

Devidas waved his hand: "Don't trouble me further, woman! Just send the little red hen to school—maybe a hen could learn reading and writing, but Machamma? Never! It is a joke! The very gods

would hold their sides and laugh to see a girl trying to be a boy."

"Oh!" begged Machamma, her great brown eyes pleading the words she could not get courage to say.

"Little idiot, be gone!" snapped her father.

And the uncles laughed loudly.

Machamma cried.

"Tut! Tut!" corrected granny, sternly, "don't be so foolish. Your own father never read anything in all his life, your uncles never read anything, your grandfather never read anything; why should *you* put on such airs? Thinking you can do what grown men can not do. I tell you, it's just one of those fairy stories any stranger from far away likes to stuff into gullible ears."

"White folks must eat the fruit of madness to suggest these wild things," chuckled the Youngest Aunt.

"Keep still," mumbled the Old Aunt, "time enough for *you* to gabble when Manikam learns to read."

Grandfather nodded: "I see no reason why Manikam should not go to the school. The white Sahib has a Hindu fellow with him to teach that school. A brown Hindu is safer than a white Sahib."

"Very much safer," said Devidas.

"And Manikam is a boy. It would be well for him to learn to read. Only the very high caste know this thing called reading—a Brahman here and there, or a merchant or two."

"Manikam may get to be as wise as a Brahman, just fancy!"

"Fancy!" echoed the aunts, wagging their heads until their ear-rings tinkled.

But in spite of all this, Machamma really did go to school, and it came to pass in the simple way in which difficulties are sometimes overcome. She just—*went*. You may think it rather wicked of her, but her mother had secretly arranged the little scheme, then ordered loudly: "Out from under my feet, tiresome girl! Get thee outdoors, I am too busy to be bothered. Out, I say!" (All this for the benefit of Granny and the Old Aunt who were forever on hand to overhear everything!)

Pretending to leave the house most unwillingly, Machamma dragged herself outside; but once there, she skipped away on merry feet to this thing-called-a-school.

Now I do hope you are not picturing some grand place: all red bricks and stone steps outside, with blackboards and nice little desks and ink-wells inside. For the truth of the matter is that there *was* no school to be seen anywhere! But there was a banyan tree which obligingly sent down shady branches, and under this shade the first school in town for girls was opened. As for desks, the wriggly pupils would not have known what to do with them, for they sat on the ground feeling perfectly contented that this was the way school ought to be. As for blackboards, what could be handier than the brown dust, with fingers for chalk?

They began tracing the curious hooks and curves of Indian A B C's in this dust, and nearly burst with pride when they formed any curve correctly, for what

do you suppose? Every girl who traced perfect letters was promised a wonderful little colored picture which had come all the long, long way from "America" where there were whole clans of other white sahibs with gold hair. Surely you have guessed already that those wonderful pictures were nothing but the old used picture post-cards over the backs of which Tim and Tom had laboriously pasted clean white sheets of paper. And on these sheets of paper Bonnie Aunt had printed in her best Indian lettering the little Bible sentence: "God is love." You might not think that such a tiny verse would finally "take a town," as bomb-shells do in war-time. But there never were three words so brimful of astonishing meaning—for who in the Town of the Twisted Tulsi Tree had ever heard of a God of *love*? Those little cards, therefore, were Bonnie Aunt's first missionary seeds. She knew that, like all seeds, they would need careful watering and plenty of sunlight before they would sprout!

But the strangest thing was what Machamma's card accomplished. She had been so afraid that she was not going to earn one! Again and again she had had to smooth the sandy dust to start anew, but finally she had an "almost-perfect" letter.

"See! See!" she cried, clapping her hands until her glass bracelets tinkled musically.

Bonnie Aunt saw the funny little mistakes bristling at every corner of that pattern, but she did not want to discourage any of her wee ambitious scholars and awarded Machamma the coveted card. Whereupon that small maiden became so excited that she com-

pletely forgot that school was to be kept a secret—she flew home as if her heels were winged: “Look!” she cried, “just look! I’ve learned the trick called writing! I’ve earned a present. You said I couldn’t, but I have!”

Which was quite the longest sentence she had ever uttered in the presence of her father and those indifferent uncles.

For once in their lives they were so interested in Machamma that they forgot her glaring act of disobedience. Six grown men fingered that little card and looked at the picture on it,—just an ordinary little picture like a dozen of the postals in your home this very minute: but I think Tim and Tom feel now that this one card was worth all their effort because of the lovely thing that came of it!

For Devidas said magnanimously: “Who would have believed it?”

“Not I!” sighed each uncle separately.

“You might as well let the Blot try another day of school,” said grandfather, “for maybe those white Boasters aren’t as boastful as we supposed. Who ever saw a present like this?”

“Not I!” sighed each uncle separately.

And Machamma could hardly wait for morning!

VII

CHURCH-BELL BILLY TURNS INTO A BOOK-SELLER

IT was Sunday morning. But nobody in all that heathen town knew that Sunday was any different from Monday; yet here was Dr. Drake ready to preach a sermon and Mrs. Drake anxiously looking down the street for the congregation she had been inviting all week long.

"What we need is a church-bell," she sighed (not that there was a *church*, as yet; but there was the banyan tree, of course).

"Where will you get a church-bell?" asked Dr. Drake.

"Where indeed?" sighed Bonnie Aunt, then she saw Billy-Boy! Why not turn him into one? Very secretly she put him into his baby-carriage and handed him the little toy drum which Tim and Tom had sent all the way over the ocean. Then she trundled the carriage down the narrow streets and lanes.

"*Thump! Thump! Thumpety—thump—thump!*" banged Billy, chuckling and dimpling all over his dear little round face. People came rushing to their doorways to see what in the world was happening.

"We're on our way to church," Bonnie Aunt called out presently, "won't you come along with us?"

"We might," said the Weaver families, tagging behind.

"Let's see what it's all about!" said the Potters, dropping their lumps of moist clay and falling into line.

"Mercy on us! Look at the parade!" gasped the Goldsmiths. For the first thing any one knew the procession had grown to be twenty persons, then thirty, then forty . . . but Dr. Drake had no time to count them! He was so surprised to see such a congregation arriving that his sermon flew out of his head completely; he said afterwards that the only thing he could think of was the Bible verse: "*And a little child shall lead them.*" (As a matter of fact, however, he preached a remarkably good sermon for a man who was a doctor; and when it was over, he gave pills to those who were sick; so it was a very successful Sunday!)

But the next day Bonnie Aunt noticed a pile of Bibles in the bungalow. They had brought them from the big city to sell in the Town of the Twisted Tulsi Tree, but try as they would nobody would buy one.

"I have no annas," said one man.

"I do not know how to read," said another.

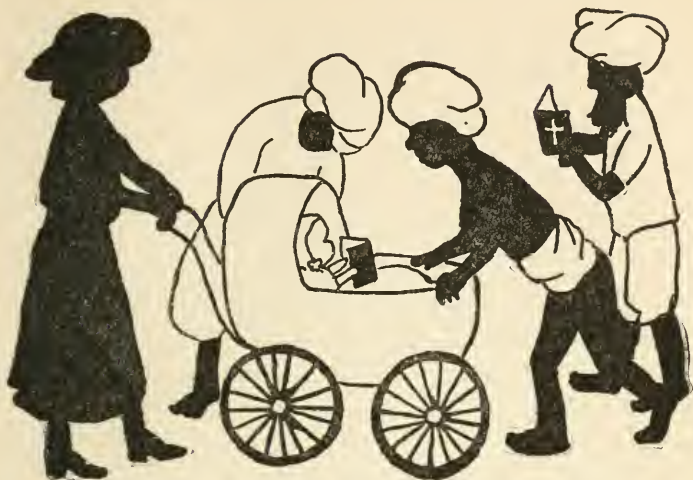
"I am too busy," cried a third.

"Why do you want to give us another god to worship?" groaned a fourth. "We have more now than we can count on the fingers of two hands."

Excuses; excuses; excuses.

But Bonnie Aunt remembered Billy-Boy! Might he not be a born book-seller? She put him into his baby carriage with little Bibles all around him; she

You Wonder When Billy Slept 75.



Here are some Inklings to prove what fun a missionary baby can have if he takes life in the proper fashion—being a church bell, heading parades, selling Bibles and starting Mother's Clubs. You wonder when Billy slept!



Church-Bell Billy Turns Book-Seller 77

trundled him down the roadway to a certain shady palm tree on the edge of the market-place; then she opened one of the Bibles and put it in Billy's hands. He looked at it in the greatest surprise, cooing at it and wrinkling up his nose at it, so altogether fascinated that a man passing by said to Bonnie Aunt:

"Mem Sahib, do I believe my eyes? Isn't this white baby *reading*?"

"It almost looks that way," laughed Bonnie Aunt; and at that very moment the baby turned over a page! Solemnly,—*"like a pundit,"* the man said afterwards.

"Well, I never!" he gasped.

"You really ought to own a copy for yourself," Bonnie Aunt said craftily, and was about to lift one from the bottom of the baby carriage when Billy-Boy did his second lovely trick: crowing with delight he poked his Bible up into the stranger's face, as if to say: "Just read it for yourself, kind sir; it's very interesting!"

You may be sure the Hindu bought the Book (it was not a Genesis-to-Revelation Bible, but the gospels only: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John), and spread the news through the bazaar that the Mem Sahib's infant was a prodigy:

"Too comical! Sits there reading like a pundit, a man of deep learning. Come and see for yourselves."

So a crowd gathered to see the Baby-Who-Could-Read; and Billy-Boy certainly flapped the pages most intelligently, although all he said was: "Goo! Goo!"

"Amazing!" laughed the bystanders; and a number of them bought Bibles, some because they were amused,

some because they were curious, and some because they were hungry for the God of Love this Bible contained.

"Mem Sahib," asked a woman, "is he really white-all-over? Even under his clothes?"

"Indeed, yes, every inch of him!" Bonnie Aunt assured her; and the woman gave a bracelet in exchange for a Bible, hoping it would turn her chocolate-colored baby white, so *he* could read!

Everywhere that Billy went, Bibles were sure to go, after that; and one day, near the village well, a certain mother said enviously: "A *Bible* baby is quite different from our babies!"

"Quite different," agreed Bonnie Aunt.

"Fatter!" sighed the Mother-Whose-Baby-Was Weazened-and-Thin.

"Pleasanter!" sighed another Mother-Whose-Baby-Was-a-Prince-of-Wails!

"Wiser!" sighed a third Mother-Whose-Baby-Was-Blind.

"How do you make a Bible baby fat and pleasant and wise?" they asked, setting down the great clay jars they had brought to the well for water.

Bonnie Aunt looked at that well; and sighed! It was not like our deep country wells here in America, but more of a pool. And while she was looking she saw strange sights: in the middle of the pool lay a buffalo, wallowing around to cool off. Nearby, the town washermen were soaking the dirt out of their customers' clothes; little boys were bathing in the water, a woman was washing vegetables; another woman was cleaning her teeth with a stick for a tooth-brush;

Church-Bell Billy Turns Book-Seller 79

and *that* was the water which other women were carrying home in clay jars to drink!

"Bible babies are brought up with pure clean water," Bonnie Aunt cried, "that well water is stagnant and filthy. The dirt in it would make a baby blind. It would make a baby sick. It would make a baby unpleasant."

The mothers laughed.

"Oh, but Mem Sahib, it is all the water we have! We were all brought up on that water. It is good water. It is pure water!"

Bonnie Aunt looked at the buffalo and the washermen and the vegetable-cleaning-woman. Ugh!

"Are you never sick yourselves?" she asked.

"My ear!" cried one woman.

"See the sores all over me," cried another.

"Things I eat make me ache inside," sighed a third. "It is evil spirits in the food, Mem Sahib. That merchant puts an evil eye on me!"

"It is the *water*, that bad well water," insisted Bonnie Aunt. "If you would only boil the water before you use it, you would be better! The Lord God has sent me to this village to tell you these things, so that you can have Bible babies, too. Fat like Billy! Pleasant like Billy! Wise like Billy!"

Billy cooed up into the gentle, wistful brown faces all around his mother. "Wa-a-a-a!" he remarked solemnly.

"What is he saying, Mem Sahib?" they asked eagerly.

Bonnie Aunt smiled tenderly: "I think he is invit-

ing you to come to our bungalow to-morrow afternoon."


That evening Bonnie Aunt wrote a letter:—

Dear properly-brought-up Twinnies,

There's one missionary in India who is *not* paid a salary, but oh! the work he does! To-day he helped me start a Mothers' Club; to-morrow he will nobly back me up as I tell the village mothers that cucumbers are really very very bad for little tummies, that colic is not caused by evil spirits and cannot be chased away by beating drums. That's probably all we can do in one afternoon, for I will tell them a Bible story, of course; then as they go home I will give each of them one of those darling advertisements of babies which you cut out of magazines for me and pasted on squares of colored cardboard. I know exactly what will happen: "Oh, Mem Sahib," they will cry admiringly, "is this a Jesus Christ baby?"

"Yes," I will nod, "a Jesus Christ baby."

And the little unpaid missionary will wag his head cooing: "Da-a-a-a!"

For of course you've guessed he's Billy-Boy, our only church-bell, our star Bible-seller, our "Better Baby Exhibit." We wonder how we could ever manage without him! For Billy  those lovely pictures you pasted for me = one new idea a day in the Town of the Twisted Tulsi Tree.

With oceans of love (both Atlantic and Pacific!) from

Bonnie Aunt.

VIII

MR. PIED PIPER, M.D.

“‘**M**ARY had a little lamb!’” quoted Bonnie Aunt at chota hazri the next morning. (That is the way of saying “early breakfast” in India.)

“Are you referring to anybody in particular?” asked Dr. Drake.

“Yes, sir, *you*, sir!”

“Meaning?”

“Manikam, of course. That boy is your very shadow, Harry! His family will forget what he looks like, for when is he ever home? He certainly adores you.”

“Excuse!” interrupted the House Boy, smiling, “but Mem Sahib should see the whole *tail* of shadows which tag after the Doctor Sahib wherever he goes!”

“The Pied Piper of our hamlet!” Bonnie Aunt exclaimed, clapping her hands.

Dr. Drake gave an embarrassed laugh: “It’s my pills and my stethoscope and my bandages! Manikam began it by having an ugly cut on his elbow; because of a thimbleful of antiseptic and a two-inch strip of adhesive plaster he became the hero of the town. The other boys couldn’t develop ailments fast enough. It pays to advertise—on Manikam! In America a new doctor hangs out a shingle; I just hang out Manikam.”

"And where do you hang him?" asked Bonnie Aunt anxiously.

"Anywhere and nowhere, but especially by the gateposts of my magnificent hospital. He describes its glories to all the passersby, he describes the wonders of the things-called-beds on which patients sleep half-way up to the roof instead of on the floor as they must at home. Very soft, he says! Very get-well-quick! Manikam is the one person to whom my hospital is absolutely perfect."

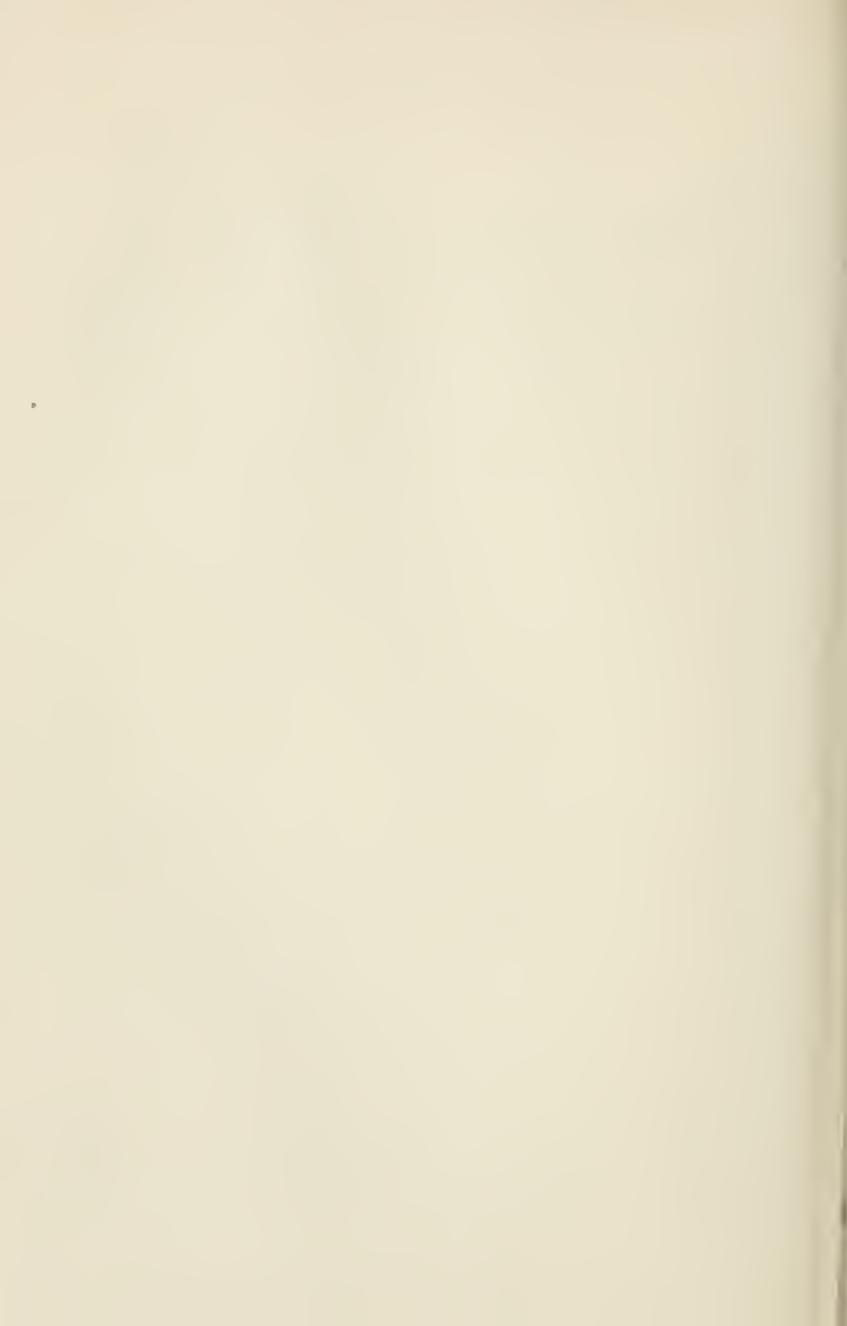
"Ah!" sighed Bonnie Aunt. She could joke about anything, but not about that hospital. She had thought that when she married a doctor he would have a hospital with entrances and exits and waiting-rooms and corridors and snowy cots. Not to mention blue cotton nurses and a spotless operating room. But the church members of their denomination back home in America had no money left over for hospitals—they were very sorry, couldn't Dr. Drake find some little already-built-house that would do for a year or two? Maybe a hospital would not be popular right away—in a strange town, you know; among people who believed that beating a drum and giving rice to an idol was the way to cure sickness; etc., etc. They thought up several other reasons, too.

Dr. Drake tried to excuse his church in America. But Bonnie Aunt would have none of it!

"The idea! Write them a very positive letter, Harry Drake; tell them you can't and you won't use that horrid little one-roomed shanty another minute when this town is brimful of sick folks. Sicker than any-



These little village detectives are hot on the trail of Mr. Pied Piper, M.D., for—as Manikam complained—he led them too merry a chase all day long from the street of the Brahmans to the street of the Sweepers, and then (mercy on us!) even into the outcaste palem!



body ever gets in America! Sick all over! Dirty all over! Hot all over! Wilted with heat and hunger! Tell them your patients all arrive bringing half a dozen relatives, not to mention pots and pans, so that their cooking can be done separately in order not to break caste by eating from anybody's else pot and pan! Tell them I'm worn to ribbons using all the tact of Solomon and all the years of Methuselah in shipping half those relatives back home and providing separate fires and sleeping quarters for the ones who *stick*! Tell them—"

Dr. Drake put down his tea-cup: "You're wasting time, dearest," he sighed, "for this is such a perfectly lovely harangue you're firing at me! But I know it by heart already. And I can't write it home to America. Missionaries never do. They wait. And they hope. And they pray. And at the end of the year they send home statistics. Do you know what statistics are?"

"Of course! They're what nobody ever reads!"

"Bonnie! You aren't one of those people who thinks that statistics are only neat little rows of figures up and down a piece of paper, are you? Statistics, my dear, are *Inklings*! They are *hints* which boil down into small print the most thrilling adventures in the world, and the most tiresome, too. For statistics are written by the feet of missionaries plodding through narrow lanes, in and out of market-places, up and down the rows of hospital cots, into school-rooms. Statistics leave out all the backaches and heartaches

but tell in neat little rows of figures what we've been doing on our side of the world."

"Who's haranguing now, Mr. Pied Piper, M.D.?" Bonnie Aunt inquired, with a very lovely look in her eyes. "You're a real *saint*! I think statistics are a perfectly odious way to ask for what you deserve. I think they ought to be told what a wonderful doctor they're wasting."

"But I'm not wasted! Ask Manikam! Ask Manikam's mother! Didn't she weave me a wreath of marigolds and garland me just as she garlands the *idols*? Of course I'm not quite so popular with her now on account of the wild tales he brings home about me. That boy! He fires so many questions at me that I'm left breathless. He looks at my rows of labelled bottles: 'What's in those bottles, Sahib? Do they taste good? Why don't they taste good? What are they made of? Where did you get them? What will you do with them? How long will they last? How sick must I become to have a pill out of the blue bottle? Out of the brown bottle? Out of the white bottle? What do the labels say? How soon can I write a label?' He makes the room reel round dizzily! Yet I like it in him. It shows he is waking up. What do you suppose he asked for last night?"

"Can't imagine!"

"My little laboratory scales. They simply fascinate him, and after pestering me for days with questions he finally mastered the way they work. So now he wants to take them home to *weigh the rice they offer to the family idols*. He has always had his suspicions about

that rice. Even after a day of belonging to the wooden images it never *seems* to grow any less, he tells me; therefore, are the idols really fed? Well, he can now prove it to himself by weighing."

"The first thing you know, Pied Piper, you'll be spending every extra minute with those boys. Weren't you teaching them football yesterday?"

Dr. Drake grunted: "*Teaching?* That, my dear, was a solo! I did it all alone. The boys seem so listless and tired,—old men already, some of them; I suppose it's the effect of centuries of hot climate in their blood. Anyhow, I longed to get a new backbone into them, so I unpacked my old college football. 'What is it? What do you do with it?' asked Manikam. 'It's a game boys in America play to make them strong. See, you kick it like this! Fine sport!'"

"Well, what happened?" asked Bonnie Aunt.

But it seemed that *nothing* happened!

"How much do American boys get paid for playing it?" Manikam had asked. "*Nothing?* But what a lot of trouble to run around kicking such a big ball all for nothing! Why not hire a servant to kick it around? What's it made of? LEATHER!! But, sahib, we don't dare touch leather—it is unholy. No caste boy could do it without losing caste. Leather comes from dead animals. It is unholy to touch dead animals. They might be ancestors."

So Dr. Drake rendered his "solo," kicking the football all over the compound, trying to make them see what fun it was. . . .

Enter the House Boy: "Excuse, Sahib. You see

everybody, but you won't see this old scallawag at the door, will you? I keep telling him and telling him to go away. He's no account, Sahib,—one of those untouchables from the outcaste palem. No need to waste time on such scum. But there he sits on the door-sill, unbudgeable! You can observe him for yourself."

Dr. Drake looked the House Boy up and down: "I am never cross," he said calmly, "but I am getting cross now. How often must I tell you that I am most anxious of all to see these poor people you despise? You will now go and say to him in your politest manner: 'The doctor will welcome you into his office. Kindly step this way, sir.'"

Bonnie Aunt looked at the House Boy. And he looked at her! She nodded. Wagging his turban regretfully, he left the room.

"He means all right," she laughed.

"He acts all wrong," grinned the Pied Piper.

The little clock chimed seven times, and a new busy day had begun.

.
It was toward noon, after her own little girl pupils had skipped home, that Bonnie Aunt heard the boys leaving their school. Then came a knock.

"Come in," she called. And Manikam entered. He had proved for all time that idols do not eat the food offered to them: "I weighed the rice," he chuckled, "then I left it a whole day and weighed it again. The finger of the scales pointed always at the same number. But my grandfather is displeased. He says

idols eat the *spirit* of the food. He says if he ever catches me weighing anything again it will be the end of school for me. And if I turn Christian he will disown me. I must never darken his door again. My mother is very much provoked also. Do you think they mean it?"

"Yes, they do. We must always go about these new things very gently and quietly, Manikam."

"But my family want me to learn to read, they want me to learn to write, but they do not want me to *think*. Yet how can I help thinking when things buzz around in my head all day?"

"You might try them out on me first," Bonnie Aunt suggested. "What sort of things buzz the worst?"

"*Everything*, Mem Sahib. You have brought everything into my head all at once. Clocks, now! What makes them go? What makes them tick? Why does the round white part look like Billy's face? Why is one black whisker shorter than the other black whisker? Why does the long whisker hurry around faster than the short one? Why does the clock make a loud noise only when the short whisker sits on a certain spot? Where does that loud noise come from? I should like to see the inside of one, Mem Sahib."

"I dare say!" gasped Bonnie Aunt, feeling rather limp after explaining clocks as best she could. "Is that all that buzzes in your head?"

"No," said Manikam; "I want to know about your pen that swallows the inkbottle? What makes it suck the ink? How long will it stay fed?"

On and on he questioned Bonnie Aunt, and she did

her best in answering, knowing the boy had a rare mind and that it had a whole new world with which to grapple. Then he said: "Well, I must be going. This is the hour when you lie down so the punkah can cool you. Some time I will come again and ask you about caste. The Doctor Sahib doesn't seem to know there *is* such a thing! Any hour of any day you can see him going from the street of the sweepers to the street of the Brahmans; imagine! My grandfather says people who are white-all-over are *out-castes*. Are you?"

"What do you think?" Bonnie Aunt was anxious to hear his "buzzing" on this subject.

But Manikam shook his head. "It is too hard for me," he sighed. "Now Machamma, my cousin, is nothing but a foolish girl, but she says there is a special caste of white people who *sprang from the Lord God!* She says you are probably the Lord God's wife. But excuse her, Mem Sahib, she has no sense, that Blot! My uncle will be making a marriage for her as soon as he can get her a husband."

When Manikam left, Bonnie Aunt said to Richer-Than-Rubies (the Bible woman): "I think it is high time for you and me to call on the family of Devidas, Machamma's father."

"Oh, Amma," cried Richer-Than-Rubies, "they will not let you in! They will not even let *my* shadow fall inside their front door. That Devidas! It's good he even lets little Machamma come here to school—of course there is advantage in her being educated. But he hates us bitterly. He beats Machamma for hum-

ming our little Jesus-loves-me song to her mother. Some day you will probably meet this Pitchamma at the village well—having no son, she has to do all the heavy work, Amma. Pitchamma is hungry for a God like ours, but she cannot believe He is kind to *women*, so I whisper: ‘Just look at *me*, Pitchamma! See how kind God has been to me, for I was one of those widows. Despised. Outcaste. Untouchable. But the Saviour looked down in love: “I will lift up this Richer-Than-Rubies.” And He lifted me. Right up! Way up!’ Pitchamma can see for herself how the Saviour can bless a widow-woman, can’t she, Amma?”

“Yes,” said Bonnie Aunt, and kissed the dear brown face. The Saviour had no miracle in India as lovely as Richer-Than-Rubies.

IX

HIDE AND GO SEEK

HIDE AND GO SEEK was a somewhat uncomfortable "game" which the Drakes played every Friday of their lives. Not that they *always* succeeded in getting away from the Town of the Twisted Tulsi Tree to play it, but they always tried. And this is the way they generally did it:

Bright and early one Friday morning there was a bullock cart waiting outside the door, with Sathiavadam (the boys' teacher) piling it full of pill-boxes and lunch-baskets, stethoscope and surgical dressings, Sunday school cards and charts—not to mention the baby organ which was carefully hoisted on board!

Indoors the Doctor Sahib had finished chota hazri, and suddenly dropped into their one comfortable padded chair, as he sighed: "Pretty soft! Now Bonnie Annie Laurie, it's your turn!"

Bonnie Aunt laughed her dear little laugh and sank into the chair with a luxurious sigh. Then up she jumped, and those two grown missionaries bowed to that upholstered chair: "Farewell, oh chair!" cried Dr. Drake.

"Aren't we ridiculous?" sighed Bonnie Aunt.

"Not at all!" he answered. "I see in you the beautiful princess of a fairy tale, one of those heroic creatures who slam the palace gates behind them, giving



“You stay so short and you go so long!” sighed the poor left-behind patients on the days when the Drakes played God’s beautiful game of Hide-And-Go-Seek.



up all comfort and all glory in order to help rescue a disguised prince from the dire fate of——”

“Sahib,” said Sathiavadam, salaaming in the doorway, “the bullock cart is in readiness outside, if you——”

“Ready!” cried Bonnie Aunt, hoping he had not seen them bowing to the chair! Sathiavadam was a perfect dear and had “a way with him” in teaching Hindu boys, but he was rather serious. He thought the Mem Sahib was sometimes rather frivolous! The Doctor Sahib, on the other hand, was perfection. Too busy. Too interested. Too much employed with church and school and hospital.

“Sometime, Pied Piper,” begged Bonnie Aunt, “you tell Sathiavadam how busy I am, too! Just give him an inkling of my jobs, dear: school, and mothers’ club, visiting, classes in lace-making, not to mention house-keeping and Billy. Stick up for me, Pied Piper!”

“I do!” he laughed, “and only yesterday Sathiavadam commissioned me to ask you to get him a wife, please. ‘What kind of a wife?’ I asked. ‘Educated,’ he said, ‘and with the same attainments as Amma.’”

“Oh!” sighed Bonnie Aunt, contented. “I feel better. Come on, let’s be off!”

So off they went.

Jolt! Jounce! Rumble! Rattle! Jounce! Rickety—rackety—rack! The palm leaf awning of the bullock cart swishing and swaying.

“The oxen have started,” announced Pied Piper, M.D.

“Really?” asked Bonnie Aunt, as if she did not al-

ready feel the hairpins slipping out of her hair. Yes, actually, one had come loose already!

Jolt! Jounce! Jiggle! Bounce! Jounce! Rumble! Rickety—rackety—rick! Minute after minute, hour after hour,—shaking her, quaking her, aching her, until Bonnie Aunt began to wonder if her very brains were not in danger of scrambling. But this was the thing one had to do in playing Hide and Go Seek.

“Alm-m-most t-there,” said Pied Piper, M.D. presently in a queer choppy voice, broken into many sections by the rattling and the jouncing.

“I’m-m-m a b-bit s-s-stiff,” Bonnie Aunt answered choppily, trying to rid her knees and elbows of the pins-and-needles feelings.

Just ahead she saw a group of people. Waving their arms, some of them. Smiling all over their faces, some of them. Hurrying forward, some of them. Limping as fast as they could, some of them.

“Oh, Doctor Sahib, I come at dawn. How I’ve waited for you! And see, here’s the baby—better, eh? Doesn’t cry like she did. Haven’t given her a single cucumber since you left. But they laugh at me back home. Crazy way to feed a baby, they say! *Just milk!*”

“Get out of my way, you woman!” ordered a man hobbling in front of her, hitting her aside. “Sahib, look at my knee. Very black and blue. Evil spirits in it, I guess. Well, can *you* scare them out, that’s the question?”

“Sahib, you go so long and you stay so short, you

never get around to me. But see, Sahib, I have a big hurting here. See!"

That is the way it was everywhere: people pushing and jostling to be the first patient! But Bonnie Aunt knew what to do, and she started doing it on the baby organ. *Music?* Ah, they loved music, and above the babel of voices she sang a hymn . . . half the patients straggled away from the Doctor Sahib to cluster around her. Then Richer-Than-Rubies told them a story of the Lord God, and, oh, the startled questions those people asked. If you went on a pilgrimage how soon could you reach the shrine of this God of Love? Was He really kind to women? Marvelous! Ah, they were so hungry for a God like that . . .

Meanwhile Pied Piper M. D. took his patients in turn, hearing their aches and pains; to some he gave pills, others he bandaged till they puffed with pride at the curious sight of themselves criss-crossed with gleaming gauze and plasters. He filled their bottles with medicine; one little boy who brought no bottle and had not a single pice to pay for one found a gourd—he broke off the end to let out the seeds and into this he stored his capsules for stomach ache, until Dr. Drake discovered his plight and gave him a bottle for nothing. Indeed, he gave *everything* for nothing, it sometimes seemed to Bonnie Aunt, for they had been warned to charge a tiny sum for treatments, as the patients would value them more. But what can you charge to a man-with-a-family who earns four cents a day? Pied Piper M. D. said little of money; but

a great deal about how *not* to do it! For instance:

Old Woman-Crick-in-the-Back said crossly: "I used the vaseline every day as you ordered, but I ask you—are my sores any better? Just as red! Just as itchy! Bah, it's no good!"

"How did you use the vaseline?"

"This way," she said. And rubbed the tiny *tin tube* over the angry red spots!

"See here," cried Pied Piper, M. D., "it's the ointment *inside* that tube that does the work. You forgot to unscrew the cap, to squeeze it out this way. Soft, isn't it? Soothing, isn't it? Just try it every day until I come again."

"Well," cried the old lady, "I might! You always want your own way, don't you? And here I've been expecting to be well weeks ago."

So it went until everybody had been attended to: some ignorant, some ungrateful, some hopeless, some fascinated. As the bullock cart ambled off to its next stop there would always be many voices calling:

"Oh, must you go? You stay so short and you go so long! You are soon lost to us in the dust of your cart-wheels, Sahib. 'Can't you come back to-night? Can't you come back to-morrow? Come back and sit down in our village forever, you and the gold lady. We will build you a little house. We will garland you with oleanders like the gods. Come back and stay, Sahib!"

Bonnie Aunt always said the same thing as she looked back through the dust: "Oh, if there were only a dozen of you and me! We aren't enough to

go around. It's so pitiful to give them that little hour of pills and Bible! Can such hurried snatches of help ever 'take a town,' Harry?"

"God only knows, dear," said the doctor. And God did know exactly what a blessing they left behind at every hurried stop each Friday. Sometimes it would be under a grove of mango trees where a group would be waiting in one village; by the well in another hamlet; at the cross-roads, further on; and if they ever left an old route to reach new villages they often went from house to house seeking the hidden invalids.

There were adventures on those trips, for once in a strange village their bullock cart was stoned.

"We don't want you, you people who are white-all-over! You have come to bewitch us! You have the evil eye. Go away!" these hostile people shouted, led by their priest who also flung his stones and thought it very clever when one of them hit the gold-haired woman on the head.

Bonnie Aunt was so astonished. "I never thought they'd try to hurt me!" she exclaimed.

"The point is—*did* they?" the Pied Piper asked, anxiously examining the spot.

"Gold hair and a pith hat are good protections," she laughed shakily. For it is not pleasant to be hated, yet see what grit she had: "Harry, let's go back next week! Let's go back and show them they can't scare the friends of God!"

Then, later, there was the time a thunderstorm brewed itself into a terrible tempest, and night fell

sooner than they expected. In utter darkness the poor oxen plodded patiently along something that did not seem to be a road at all, for the first thing any one knew there was a sickening lurch and everything slid backward out of the wagon into water.

"Bonnie, are you there?"

"Yes, dear, but I've lost the baby—"

"*Billy?*" gasped the startled doctor, trying to swim nearer, but tangled hopelessly in weeds.

"No, no! The baby *organ!* Billy's home in bed, dear man. Do you think this is a river? I'm all gummed up in ooze! We ought to reach shore easily; where's your hand?"

Sathiavadam was the only one who had not slid out backward, so up in the cart he managed to strike a match, and what do you suppose? They were not drowning in some dangerous torrent of a river, but were stranded waist-deep in a flooded paddy (rice) field!

"Which probably is the nearest I shall ever come to being a rice pudding," Bonnie Aunt wrote home to Tim and Tom, "but I am sorry to say that our darling baby organ caught pneumonia in one lung from that soaking and even my best doctor in all India cannot cure her wheeze."

Hide and Go Seek? Well, maybe it *was* a game that made backs ache; but how else could they spin their missionary web north, south, east and west, helping as the Great Physician helped long years ago when He was here among men—healing the sick and preaching the gospel to the poor and needy.

X

THE TROUBLE-CALLED-CHRISTMAS

BONNIE AUNT thought that the dearest sight in the world was her little pupils arriving in the morning like bits of the rainbow in their gay-colored sarees. There would be Lakshmamma in lavender and Krupamma in yellow, Dukhi in green and Manorama in blue, with Machamma in coral pink. "Looping the loops" of their draperies more securely every few minutes, and hardly ever very clean,—how could they be when they ate in those sarees sitting on the floor and slept in those same sarees lying on the floor? But Bonnie Aunt said it would never do for such rainbow glory to leave her dusty school dustier than it arrived, so the first thing her little pupils did each morning was to scamper out and select a clean green leaf apiece to sit on, a really big one, of course, so that it could be squirmed around on comfortably all morning. And Bonnie Aunt talked so continually of their sarees that it dawned on them that it really would not be much trouble to wash them—just walk into the village pool, swirl the saree around a few times, and walk out again. The sun would dry them out in no time at all! So day by day the Primary Department grew spick and span: "spicker and spanner than any one else in town," Bonnie Aunt wrote proudly to Tim and Tom.

You must not suppose that the only equipment kept on being dust, with fingers for pencils, as it had been in those first days. For it was not long before Krupamma was promoted to a slate! With a squeaky slate pencil. The other pupils nearly died of envy at the delightful scratchiness of Krupamma writing on her slate.

"Like tigers crackling through the dry jungle grasses she sounds!" sighed Dukhi of the green saree, enviously.

"Like monkeys cracking open cocoanuts," suggested Lakshamma, sorrowfully.

Not a girl in school but longed to squeak a little louder than Krupamma. They were sure that noise proclaimed the scholar! Such attention to letters in the sand was never seen in all of India, and one by one the others earned slates also. And after slates came primers!

How can I ever tell you what a primer means to little girls who never dreamed that girls could read, and whose family never dreamed that girls could read? It did not seem at all foolish to Machamma to read those silly little sentences that appear in primers. When she could pick out the words way over on page 21 which said: "I see the elephant," etc., she thought she certainly had learned almost all there was to learn! She even begged to take the primer home with her to show her family.

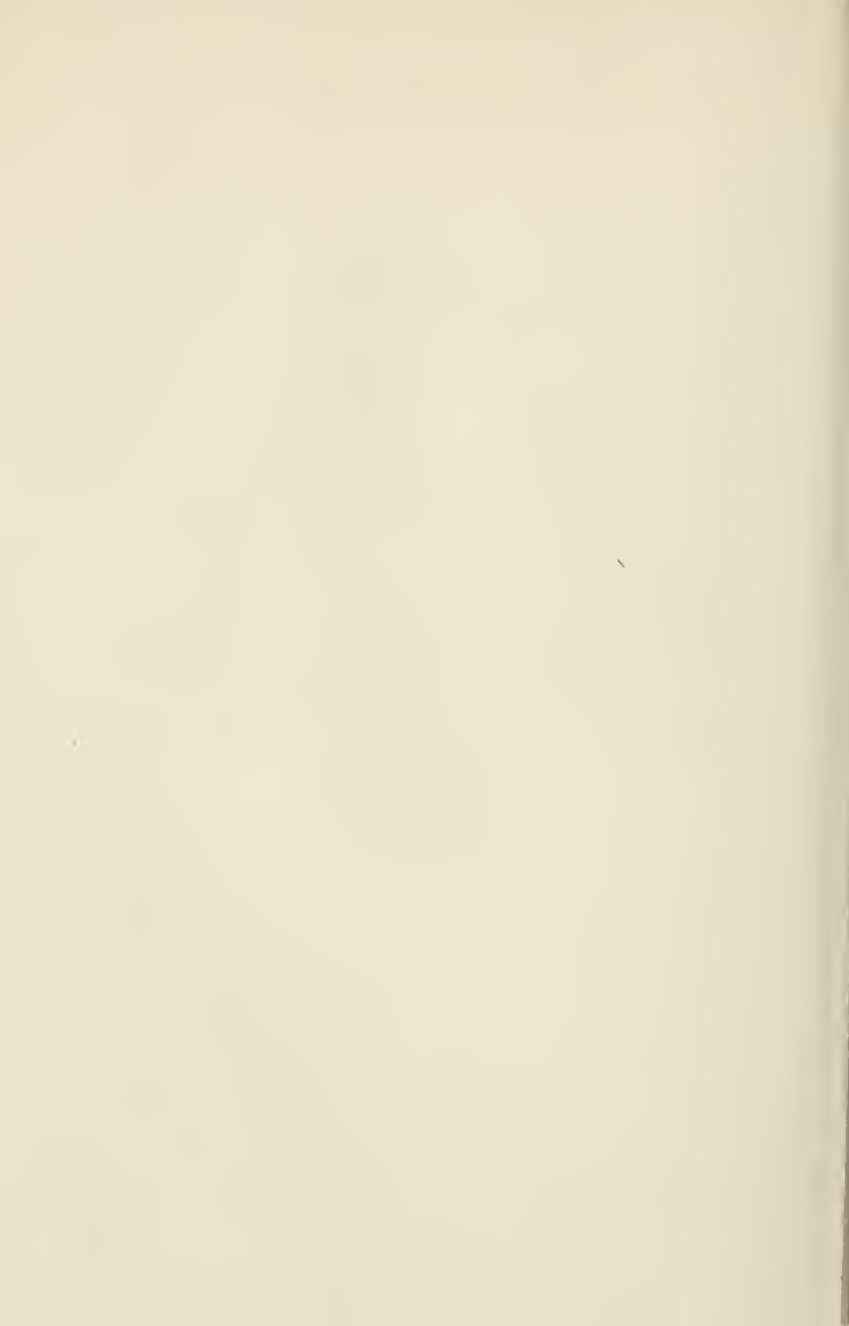
"I will wrap it in a corner of my saree, Amma. See, like this? And my saree is very clean. I washed it yesterday!"

Could Bonnie Aunt say no? Of course not! For

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This Inkling, alas! has a *blinkling* midway in it; but things cheer up considerably toward the end when a box arrives in the very nick of time from Tim and Tom.



she loved Machamma with the kind of love that hurt her in her heart. She kept wishing all the time that somebody appreciated this little Blot.

"She's so darling," said Bonnie Aunt to Dr. Drake. "Her big brown eyes are the *lovingest* eyes in India, and her smile. . . . Well, when Machamma smiles I could part with half of my kingdom."

So Machamma took home the wonderful primer, all thumbed and tattered and torn from having brought up other pupils in other mission schools; but how was Machamma to know that this was not the usual appearance of books. She *liked* them curled at the corners.

She handed the precious volume to her father and said as modestly as she could (which was *very* modest, considering the flutter in her heart): "This is my primer."

Devidas took it and opened it. But, oh, that opening was a horrible, never-to-be-forgotten thing; for he opened it upside-down! And how could a mere Blot ever tell her father that he had made a mistake? Naturally it couldn't be done.

"Read here," ordered Devidas, setting his thumb in the middle of a page, haphazardly.

Machamma peered over his shoulder anxiously, trying her best to read upside-down print, but she couldn't. I can't myself, can you? So with gentle politeness she held out her hands: "I beg you to let me hold it in my hands as we do at school."

"Ah-ha! Stuff and nonsense," cried her father. "I suspected this all along, you little fibber! You

made it all up! You *can't* read. No girl can read! The white folks simply boasted. I knew it! I knew it from the beginning. If you can read at all, read while the book is in my hands, stupid girl. I know a thing about reading, myself! I guess I've seen people read before. Have to hold it in *your* hands, do you? Ah-ha!"

Now here was a fix, indeed. I can't think what would have happened if she had not suddenly taken the only way out of it. For something certainly led Machamma to patter softly around *in front* of her father and kneel down, since then, of course, the print was right-side-up and she could read it off quite glibly.

"This is an elephant," Machamma spelled. "God made the elephant. God made the elephant to help man. God loves man."

"Listen! Listen!" shouted granny, much excited. "The child actually reads. Just fancy!"

"Just fancy!" echoed the aunts.

"Just fancy!" echoed the uncles.

"That's nothing," Manikam said scornfully. "I can read, too."

"You are a *boy-child*," said Devidas. "I had not supposed this she-child of mine could ever do this thing. Well! Well! It will turn her head."

So Machamma took the primer back to school, hugged under her saree.

"My father heard me read last night," she said to Bonnie Aunt.

"Didn't he feel proud of you, little Bit of Brownness?"

"W-well," sighed Machamma, "it was this way." And she told about the topsy-turvy mistake.

"Mercy on us!" cried Bonnie Aunt. "Whatever did you do, dear heart, for you wouldn't dare to tell him, of course?"

"Oh, no, Amma; but I whispered to Jesus to please help me quick and He put it in my heart to go in front of my father, which made the printing proper side up, you see," Machamma said with quaint relief.

Bonnie Aunt said to the doctor that night: "Oh, but she has a way with her, that little Blot! See how tactful she was! How quick-witted! And don't you think it's beautiful how close the Saviour seems to be to her? She listens with all her ears to our morning Bible stories; I'm teaching them the Beatitudes now. Machamma grasps the meaning so quickly."

If Bonnie Aunt loved Machamma perhaps you can imagine how Machamma loved *her*! There was, for instance, the matter of names. Bonnie Aunt did not know enough of the language yet to say everything correctly, but she was so bubbling over with delight when her shy rainbows appeared each morning that one day she manufactured a new name for them: "Good morning, *Morning Glories*!" she cried,—but half those little red lips pouted downward. What a way to talk! (For instead of sounding flowery in their ears it actually meant something more like "Day witches," which is not so complimentary, after all.)

Machamma turned on them like a small whirlwind. "*Of course*, no one else talks this way!" she cried. "Amma lies awake all night pulling these names out

of the love in her heart. Who ever *loved us all over* before but Amma? You smile up your faces, you!"

And they smiled them up! They had not quite understood before: everything was so new, and the white memsahib so different from any one else. But if Machamma said it was love, they would take her word for it. They, too, accepted "Amma," which is a Hindu word for mother.

Then came the Trouble-Called-Christmas. It was the quickest, most *sudden* trouble, and none of the Morning Glories could imagine what it was. They took three guesses—but even by putting their heads together they could not decide: for evidently it was *not* the Chills-and-Fever-Sickness nor the thing called Cold-in-the-Head. Besides, the Doctor Sahib could cure sicknesses, for didn't everybody in town know about that Man Who Couldn't See Out of His Eyes? How the Doctor Sahib had fastened pieces of glass on his face (spectacles) so that he saw everything now from morning till night?

"Yes," said Krupamma, "and there was the baby who almost choked to death, but didn't the Doctor Sahib cure him quick?"

Oh, yes, decidedly this Trouble-Called-Christmas was different. It made Amma cry.

They had all been in Amma's bungalow having their sewing lesson (such fun: needle stick in—needle pull out!) when suddenly Amma had looked at a big card on the wall divided into little black squares. "Look!" said Amma, pointing. "It's so hot I had lost track of

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dates, but to-day is the twenty-first, and Monday Christmas comes. *Christmas*. Oh-h!" And with that, tears suddenly rolled out of her blue eyes and slipped down her white cheeks.

Now *what* could this monster be whose coming on Monday made Amma cry?

"That Christmas!" said Machamma, fiercely doubling her fists. "If he makes you cry, don't let him in! Lock the door on him, Amma! Hide from him, Amma!"

Bonnie Aunt dried her eyes. "I can't think what made me do this silly, silly thing!" she laughed, "but all of a sudden I had a quick little vision of America at this very minute, with evergreen and holly making the house spicy, and sleigh bells jingling through the snow, and Tim and Tom trimming the dear Christmas Tree. . . ."

"She's going to cry all over again," nudged Dukhi sadly.

"That Christmas!" Machamma groaned savagely; but Bonnie Aunt simply—would—not—cry. She bit her lip and smiled up the corners shakily.

"Christmas," she explained, "is a *day*, the dearest, loveliest, jolliest day in the whole year. It's a day to love from the getting-awake-time to the going-to-bed-time, for it's Jesus Christ's birthday, didn't you know? And it can be just exactly as nice in India as in America, indeed it can! For I'm going to make it so. We'll have a little Christmas party for ourselves. We'll have a great big Christmas party for everybody. I think . . . yes, I think we will act out the story

of when Jesus Christ was born, wouldn't you *love* to? So the first Christmas ever celebrated in this town will be a joy to all of us. Then how I *do* hope I can have a grand surprise for each of you. It's on its way from Tim and Tom, if it only arrives in time. I hadn't realized Christmas was so near."

"What will the surprise look like?" asked Dukhi.

"That *would* be telling!" smiled Bonnie Aunt.

"Well, how will the surprise *come*?" asked Ma-chamma.

"That's fair enough," laughed Bonnie Aunt. "It will come in a box. And the box will come in a bullock cart down the roadway. But dear me, dear me, if the time is so short I must hurry and write that little play for us to give!"

"What will the play be like, Amma?"

"I haven't decided exactly, but you'll all be in it, and our *oxen* will be in it."

"Dear! Dear!" giggled the Morning Glories. "Suppose the oxen should make a noise in the wrong places!"

"There won't be any wrong places," Bonnie Aunt assured them. "Now shoo flies! Shoo flies! I must write that play, for even if the 'surprise' doesn't come, Christmas will. The sewing class is therefore dismissed. No, come back, every one of you; *what* do I see on the floor to hurt bare brown feet?"

"Needles!" sang the rainbows, regretfully. They were always forgetting! They picked them up and poked them in the little puffed-up cushion where Amma said needles belonged; then, their bracelets tinkling,

they hurried outdoors and looked longingly down the long, straight, dusty roadway.

Machamma scampered back. "Amma," she cried, "there is a speck coming down the road. We think it is a bullock cart—the bullock cart. With the surprises, you know!"

"Very likely," said Bonnie Aunt, absent-mindedly, for she was busy jotting down notes: "*Have oxen in rear; plenty of straw; manger in front.*"

More tinkling of bracelets and Machamma was back. "That speck was only old Nursai with fagots of wood piled up on his back. Just imagine thinking him a whole bullock cart with surprises!"

"Just imagine!" echoed Bonnie Aunt, deeply absorbed in writing: "*Get Richer-Than-Rubies to be Mary. How about putting our little Ever-Ready electric flashlight in the hay with swaddling clothes around it to represent Jesus, the Light of the World?*"

Then came Krupamma. "Amma, the Doctor Sahib is coming down the road in a bullock cart."

"Good!" cried Bonnie Aunt, and left her note about shepherds unfinished in order to welcome her husband. For he always had things to tell: sad things—glad things—mad things—about evil spirits, beatings of drums, people who took *all* their pills in *one* gulp, people who were afraid to take any, people who tried beatings and shakings and burnings before they tried pills. . . . But this time he had a glad story.

"There's a big box from Tim and Tom in the wagon," he said in the most unconcerned sort of way, as if boxes always did reach India in time. Bon-

nie Aunt beamed with delight. The Morning Glories tinkled their bracelets and jingled their anklets by clapping and dancing delightedly.

"That Christmas!" crooned Machamma happily; but from the way she said it you saw it was with little pats of affection, quite different from the earlier dread of the Trouble-Called-Christmas.

XI

WHEN CHRISTMAS CAME TO TOWN

NOBODY had dreamed that Christmas was going to be so wonderful. Although, as a matter of fact, it began all wrong—twice! For the beautiful “surprise” for the rainbow pupils nearly melted them to tears.

Brighter and earlier than usual they had come skipping along under the palm-trees that Monday morning, and Bonnie Aunt made them a little speech.

“On Christmas Day,” she said, “God gave us the Lord Jesus for our very own. He was all wrapped up in swaddling clothes, just a little baby-thing, yet nothing was ever quite the same again for the whole world. You know all this, for I’ve told you before, haven’t I, about the people whom the Lord Christ changed?”

“Yes, indeed!”

“There was the man born blind,” said Krupamma.

“That little dead girl to whom Jesus said ‘Get up, little girl, get up!’ ” said Dukhi.

“The children that sat on Jesus’ lap one day,” said Lakshmamma.

“Yes! So we have kept on giving presents to one another ever since, in gladness for that First and Dearest Christmas Present. That’s why I’m giving each

of you a little gift to-day—to show you that happiness belongs to all who love the Saviour.”

So she handed them their dolls, thinking, of course, to hear a jolly hubbub and see a merry hopping up and down as china babies were hugged in their arms. But Christmas went all wrong for five dreadful silent minutes.

The monkeys up in their tree-tops chattered miserably about it; the birds stopped all their Christmas carols—for of course they loved their Maker and knew full well what Day this was, yet here were maidens blinking on the verge of tears; yes, half of them were weeping openly in disappointment.

“Dear me!” sighed Bonnie Aunt. “What *can* it be?” Then suddenly she saw the dreadful truth: Tim had of course sent only flaxen dolls, the kind American girls always choose; but these wee brown Hindu mothers—oh, tragedy! what did they want with *faded* dolls when proper hair was always, always, always brown? *What could she do about it?* All in the twinkling of an eye? . . . for she *must* make Christmas merry!

Then, inspired, she picked up Machamma’s doll: “Doesn’t she look exactly like *me*? Gold hair? White skin—see?”

Such a flash of sudden joy and pride as smiled over Machamma’s face. “Oh, Amma,” she cried, reaching out hungry arms for the doll, “she’s *you all over!* My own precious Bit-of-Whiteness, um’m, um’m!” and she crooned a funny little made-up lullaby to make that gold-haired dolly feel at home. Then she looked



Think
of the *thinking*
that must have gone
on among the stars that
Christmas night when they looked
down and got an *Inkling* of the lovely
thing that was bringing peace and good-will
to the Town of the Twisted Tulsi Tree.

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at the rest of the Primary, still motionless. "Shame on you for hurting Amma's feelings. She has the loveliest hair in India! Anybody can have brown hair; look at the Town of the Twisted Tulsi Tree—full of brown hair. So common that even the outcastes have it. But God loves Amma with a special love, so He made her special hair and special cheeks. There couldn't be a doll I'd rather have than one that looked like Amma!"

The startled little mourners picked up their dolls. Yes, like Amma! They gave them a half-hug; then a three-quarters hug; then a whole hug. "You little Bits-of-Whiteness, you!" they crooned.

So Christmas started up merrily again, and Amma took her little pupils into the hospital where a row of patients lay so still and tired.

"It is the Saviour's birthday," she explained, "so we have come to sing a Christmas carol for you!"

The sick eyes turned toward the little choir; the choir hugged their dolls a little nervously, but sang with Amma the only Christian song they knew: "Jesus Loves Me, This I Know."

It was not till tiffin (luncheon) that Bonnie Aunt heard the "double" of her doll disaster, for the Pied Piper had also had a sorry start that morning. He had, of course, wanted to give presents to those boys who shadowed him around so faithfully and Bonnie Aunt had discovered in the famous box from Tom and Tim plenty of little wrist watches. Ten-Cent-Store kind, that do not *go*. "But isn't there a nice white dial, round like Billy's face, with two painted

'whiskers'—as Manikam once said? The boys will be tickled to pieces to have duplicates of your grand ticker, Harry."

Dr. Drake had thought they would.

But now behold, the boys drew back when he began strapping the first watch in place around the first brown wrist.

"That strap is *leather*, Sahib!" they said in a shocked chorus. "Caste boys dare not wear leather next their skin! Only outcastes ever touch it. Are our families *leather workers*? Or *drum-beaters*?"

This was a bit of history repeating itself; but both Bonnie Aunt and Dr. Drake had completely forgotten the football episode.

"Look here," he said, "do you consider *me* outcaste? Yet I wear a leather wrist watch. I wear a leather belt. I wear a pair of leather shoes."

The boys looked decidedly uneasy. They threw longing glances at the desirable watches—they had never dreamed of owning anything so marvelous—but how *dared* they?

So Christmas came to a dead standstill.

Nobody knew what to do.

Dr. Drake was a little impatient over the delay, for his patients were waiting in the hospital for him; yet how could he leave these devoted friends present-less? Then Manikam had the one bright idea sure to come to him each day—

"Sahib," he said, "if you weighed this leather in your scales it might tell you something."

Dr. Drake laughed. Those scales! To Manikam

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they could settle any question now. But quick as a flash the doctor realized that Ten-Cent-Store wrist watches from America could hardly be real leather; why had he not thought of this sooner? Now he must pretend to prove it by his scales. . . .

Very solemnly and silently he balanced a wrist watch in the approved scientific fashion which Manikam would expect; conscious all the time of two dozen pairs of hopeful eyes, waiting eagerly to know their fate.

"*Oilcloth!*" he announced jubilantly. "Not leather at all, but oilcloth painted in humps to look like leather. Very deceptive to the eye, but nothing but canvas painted brown. Not a parent could object to anything so harmless."

Sighs of relief, and a quick grab for watches. Then the sad fact came to light that there were not enough watches to go around! Sathiavadam must be very poor at counting noses, for only the day before Bonnie Aunt had asked him how many boys were now in school.

"Twenty-four," he said.

Well, here were twenty-four wrist watches. But twenty-six scholars.

Finally Manikam whispered: "It's this way, Sahib. Somaya and Sashaya never get counted. They seem new, but they're old. They began coming as soon as we did, then they got spanked for coming. It was uncomfortable, so they stayed home to rest up from the spanking. Pretty bad, it was! Then they tried school all over again, and were beaten again. Awfully

strict caste, their parents. Yet they can't seem to spank school out of Somaya and Sashaya altogether. They start up, then they die down. Yesterday I strolled around to their street and said this was going to be a very special day at school, perhaps it would be worth a spanking. So here they are!"

Presentless, too! Their big brown eyes watching this whispered conversation wistfully. Would anything come of it?

Something did!

For the Pied Piper's heart was big and wide and friendly: he loathed spankings with a fierce hatred.

"Somaya and Sashaya," he said, "the wrist watches are all gone, I fear, but here is a table covered with even nicer gifts. Choose anything you want. Think carefully, boys, choose slowly. No hurry, mind you!"

Imagine such a treat! Sashaya was all for choosing something big. First he thought he would take a biggish book, but he had hardly been at school enough to master reading, so what good would a book be? Especially as he had instantly decided on the thing he *did* want, only dared he ask for it? No, he dared not! It was so grand and big and red. With a picture at one end of it. It was too much to expect—the Sahib would undoubtedly shake his head and the other boys would cry: "Fie, for shame, Sashaya, a little chap like you to ask for that huge block of redness."

The Pied Piper saw that wish popping out of Sashaya's eyes: "Little what's-your-name; take it, boy! Take it, it's yours for the grabbing."

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"This?" he quavered, clutching the thing that was bigger than his head and shoulders.

"But, my dear fellow," cried Dr. Drake, "that's just an old empty box! You don't choose that worthless thing, do you?"

"It's red, Sahib," the little voice said, "and it's big. I like it best!" Sashaya's arms hardly met around it.

"Then it's yours," the doctor answered gently. Here was a boy so starved for *things* that empty boxes seemed desirable, even empty boxes with labels on the end reading: "Champion Extra Heavy Woolen Polo Sweater." (In *India!*)

"You will get spanked over that box," sneered Somāya, "it is too big. Where will you hide it? It is too red. Father will see it and know where you got it. But I will choose something very little. Something I can hide. I will choose this pencil, Sahib."

Sashaya snickered: "You will get spanked over that pencil! You will draw pictures on the mud walls of our hut with it,—for where else *can* you use it? Father will see; he will guess where you got it; and you will get spanked. So although it is little, it will be as big as my box. We will get spanked. But it is worth it."

"Yes, it is worth it. Christmas is a very nice day, Sahib."

As those twenty-six boys went home with radiant faces the Pied Piper said to Bonnie Aunt: "Write your choicest Thank You note to Tom and Tim, they've helped us bring Christmas to town!"

But when the silver stars began to prick through the sky and the man in the moon smiled down on the Town of the Twisted Tulsi Tree, there was something even lovelier to see. For Bonnie Aunt's Christmas pageant was being acted under the stars. Oh, such a crowd of parents whose children had received watches and dolls that morning, and of neighbors who liked to have things going on. Especially with oxen lowing in the background, and the white Mem Sahib standing up to talk. 'Sh! listen to her. . . .

"We wanted to show you what happened the night when Jesus was born," she began, and explained how there had been no room for Mary in the village inn, so it was in a stable where the little Lord Christ lay sleeping. You should have seen the dear brown Indian "Mary" hovering over him. It was Richer-Than-Rubies, in her cleanest, whitest saree; and in the Saviour's manger there was straw, yet from that straw shone forth a lovely light.

"For our Jesus is the light of all the world," crooned Mary, while the oxen munched their hay contentedly. Then twelve little Herald Angels on the roof (a very *low* roof!) sang once more that day their only carol—"Jesus Loves Me, This I Know"; as for the names of those angels, they were Machamma, Krupamma, Lakshamma, Dukhi, etc. Very white they looked against the sky, and very sweet they sounded with their little treble voices.

Then came the shepherds, crooks in hands,—Manikam, Metaya, etc., and peered curiously first at the angel visitors, then at the shining manger, while

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"Mary" told them all over again what wonderful news had come to India.

Last of all came three kings bearing gifts: old Nursai with fagots, Purushotham with a tray of mangoes, Chunder Singh with incense scenting all the air. And if you think they were not very *wise* for Wise Men, then who in all that town was wiser, since they alone had dared "get down into this new religion," as you will see in the next chapter. Altogether the Lord was born anew in many other hearts that night, when Christmas came to town.

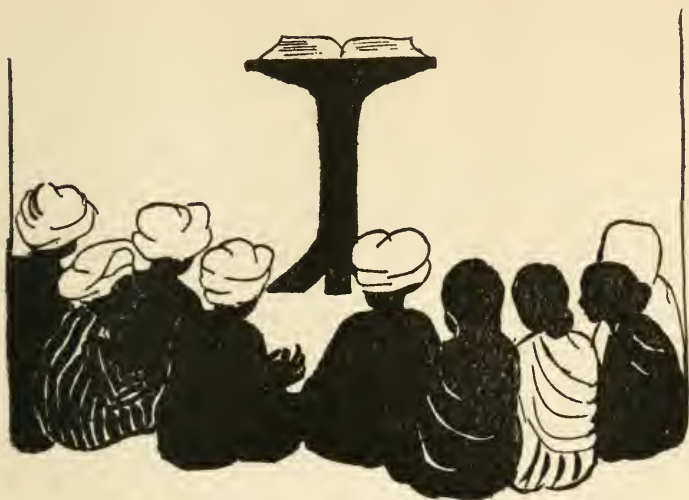
XII

THE WORM THAT PREACHED A SERMON

IT was well for Machamma that there was that worm and that sermon, for the memory of them was safely tucked away in a corner of her mind, waiting for the day when she would be greatly comforted by them.

For the astonishing worm began at the very front page of the Bible and went straight through to the last page, simply *devouring* it as he went along! Yet nobody was pleased at such literary tendencies, indeed they created quite an uproar—but you must be wondering about the beginning of this story which really goes back to that first Sunday when Billy turned into a church-bell. Every Sunday after that, church was held under the banyan tree until there was such a congregation that it seemed necessary to build a real meeting-house. So they took a collection.

Surely the queerest collection in the world, for up stood Purushotham of the carpenter caste, saying that he would give four days of time to help build Jesus Christ's house. And old Nursai, who was forever gathering fagots, arose and said he would go out and chop down bamboo poles for the supports of Jesus Christ's house. As for Chunder Singh, the farmer, he said he would give some straw for the thatched roof of Jesus Christ's house. So here were our Three



If you would gain an inkling of how dearly these new Christians prized God's house, then just read of the precious things they were willing to spare—no wonder they disliked to have a mere worm spoil it all!



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Wise Men of the Christmas pageant bringing *real* gifts for the Saviour, you see!

A certain Sunday was set when gifts were to be brought, and a wonderful day it was. For the Man Who Could Now See Out of His Eyes (because of those pieces of glass on his face!) brought mats he had woven: "Couldn't you use these palm-leaf mats for the walls?" he asked anxiously as he brought them up front to lay in the large collection basket.

"Yes, indeed!" nodded Dr. Drake, kindly.

A young woman came forward unclasping a necklace, a weaver brought several yards of shimmering hand-made cloth, an old woman brought some rice, an old man brought some betel-nuts; everybody brought *something*; Manikam brought his Christmas wrist watch—it was the most precious thing he had: not at all a ten-cent present in his eyes, but the richest of the rich. As for Machamma, how she wondered *what* to bring, for she really owned nothing at all. She hardly felt the Saviour would want her doll . . . she thought and thought . . . then she suddenly saw the little red hen. That hen had a history, for once upon a time it had been an egg, and Machamma had found the egg in the roadway. The strangest thing: not at all where eggs ever were. Yet here this one was! So she laid it under their hen to be hatched; and surely from egg-hood through chicken-hood to hen-hood this little fowl was *hers* to give or keep; so she brought it on that solemn Sunday morning.

Such a clucking and squawking! For of course hens are not used to being put in collection baskets.

But neither Machamma nor any one else thought it too noisy a gift; and Bonnie Aunt cried—the little Blot did look so sweet and serious as she pushed the hen down in the basket and wagged a warning finger at her: “Stay where you’re put!”

Dr. Drake looked at the hen, at the nuts, at the fruit, at the rice, and knew only too well that some of these brown people might go hungry several days without this food. He looked at the necklaces, bracelets and cloth and knew that here were givers willing to look plain and undecorated for the Lord Jesus’ sake. So he said: “My people, this collection is so generous, it means such sacrifice, that we cannot spend it in an ordinary way. I think that I will buy the pulpit Bible with it!”

“That is a good thought,” nodded the men.

“A fine thought,” nodded the women.

“A nice thought,” nodded the children.

For how were they to know how a church should look or what a church should have unless the Doctor Sahib told them? The old old woman liked it that her rice could buy this special Bible; the weaver liked it that his cloth could buy this thing needed in God’s house; Nursai liked it that his posts could help support the Book of Books; the woman who gave a necklace liked to know that when she missed the cool “feel” of it against her neck it would be because of the Bible . . . they *all* liked it. Especially Machamma.

But you should have heard her father! “Where is that foolish red hen?” he asked the next morning.

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But nobody knew.

Granny did not know.

The Old Aunt did not know.

The Young Aunt did not know.

The in-between aunts did not know.

Pitchamma did not know.

So the question narrowed down to Machamma: *did she know?*

"Yes! I thought it was *my* little hen, so I gave her away," she said, while all the stiffening left her knees. ("But I won't let them wobble!" she said. "Jesus, don't let me be scared!")

"To whom did you give that hen?" thundered Devidas.

"I gave it to the Saviour," Machamma whispered, feeling quite sure that even her father could not get anything away from the Lord Jesus. But he could! And he did.

He went right away to the Doctor Sahib's bungalow. "That crazy Blot of mine stole a hen yesterday. It was not her hen to give away or to keep. She is a handful—that Machamma. But the hen I must have back."

So the Doctor Sahib gave it to him. Carried by two legs all the way down the street, that hen clucked loudly in the most mortified fashion.

"I will get even with you yet!" she squawked. But to Machamma she said nothing. Nothing! She pecked in the dust of the courtyard and Machamma watched her anxiously.

"You are Jesus Christ's hen," she reminded her. The hen nodded.

"Just wait!" she seemed to say. And several times she even let down that curious inner eyelid of hers as if she were winking: "We have a secret!" So Machamma was comforted, especially as Bonnie Aunt said that the Saviour understood perfectly how it all was: if there be first a willing mind it is accepted according to what a man hath and not according to what he hath not. This was a quotation from God's Book, she said.

Meanwhile there was the sound of hammering in the air and the bustling of men carrying logs and of men thatching the straw roof, until one day God's House was ready. Not a church like your church,—with long rows of polished pews and gold organ pipes; for *this* congregation would sit on the earthen floor and the music would come from Bonnie Aunt's baby organ, which ever since being drowned that day had wheezed on certain notes. But what did that matter to the new Christians in the Town of the Twisted Tulsi Tree? They *liked* it to wheeze.

Machamma hoped her father would not remember that this was God's Day. Sunday was still like Monday or Tuesday to him.

All this time the pulpit Bible was on the pulpit table, waiting for Sunday. Nobody dreamed about the worm or knew that it was spending the week traveling from Genesis to Revelation. But early Sunday morning a very old lady brought a wreath of jasmine flowers to decorate God's House, and when in sheer curi-

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osity she raised the cover of the big new Bible she saw that startling hole.

"Alas! Alas!" she cried, dropping her jasmine and hurrying out to tell the congregation that "our Bible is all spoiled. For who can ever tell *now* exactly what the Lord God wrote there for us?"

Such a disturbance. Wailings from the women, groanings from the men. A heathen visitor said sneeringly: "Your God will send a punishment upon you for letting His Book get ruined!"

Another heathen said: "Evil spirits did this thing."

"No," said old Nursai, who had just arrived, "there are no evil spirits in God's world. I've learned that much."

Yet even he wondered who could read the Bible now that a hole had spoiled the pages. But when Doctor Sahib came he looked at the hole and he looked at the people. Then he smiled. Actually *smiled*. So Machamma knew that even a hole was going to be all right; weren't Christians wonderful?

Then church began. They sang the songs they knew. They prayed the prayer they knew, after which the Doctor Sahib said: "A hole is a very little thing. And a worm is a very little thing. Did you suppose the great Lord God could let a tiny worm destroy His Book? Did you not know that every word of it is written on some Christian's heart, stamped on some Christian's memory? So that here and there, wherever the worm has destroyed a word I can fill in that word from memory. Indeed many of you can do this, also. For see, I have opened at a certain Psalm where one

word is missing, yet I think you know it: 'The . . . is my shepherd, I shall not want?' "

"Why, I know *that*," laughed Nursai, "that's the *Lord* is my shepherd."

"Of course you know," said Dr. Drake. "Now here's a name missing from the prayer I taught you: 'Our . . . who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name.' "

Chunder Singh cried: "'Our *Father* who art in heaven'—that's it!"

Which only goes to show you how two of those Wise Men were wiser than you thought, for although they knew nothing about the three R's, yet here was the Bible, written in their *hearts*!

So Dr. Drake explained that even worse things could never wipe away the Bible, neither scoldings, beatings, persecutions, fire, swords, nor death. Indeed that little worm had preached a sermon no one could forget, neither the old old Nursai nor the young young Machamma, for the text of it was: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my Word shall *never* pass away."

XIII

HOW GRANDFATHER ATE HIS RELATIVES

NOT that he *knew* he was eating them, of course. For Machamma's grandfather was not a cannibal by nature, but as gentle an old soul as lived in the Town of the Twisted Tulsi Tree. Never had he been more astounded than on discovering that every day of his life he had run the danger of swallowing ancestors—raw or cooked, as the case might be. At first he simply laughed when Manikam told him.

"This is one of those foolish new Christian notions!" he smiled in his beard, for he knew only too well that he had never done such an atrocious thing. When any one died who was exceedingly well-pleasing to the gods, that person might go straight to Nirvana at death, and be "nothing" forever and ever. But every one else who died was born again into a different body and sent back to earth to try to please the gods better than in their former birth. You never knew beforehand what new body you would enter—if you had been very good, then you might be born into a *higher* caste; if you had been bad, then into a *lower* caste; or if you had been very very bad, you would probably be reborn into some animal—anything from an ant to an elephant!

This was a very unpleasant part of religion, because you never knew what animals your unfortunate an-

cestors might be inhabiting. Therefore did a Hindu ever eat meat, or swat a fly, or kill a snake? "Of course not," said grandfather, "we treat reptiles, birds and animals as sacred, for they may be relatives! Who knows? So what do you mean by coming home and telling me I'm *swallowing* animals?"

"A wild thing to say!" cried the uncles.

"A thing you cannot prove," said his father.

Manikam looked troubled. "But I *can* prove it!" he admitted, "but for I have seen those animals we swallow. I have seen them through a thing called a microscope. A microscope, my grandfather, is a fat piece of glass. It is so very fat that it makes everything underneath it look fat also. The first time I saw a pin under a microscope I declared that what I saw was a big nail! But no, the Doctor Sahib said it was a pin; so I said he must put that pin in my hand and show me how the magic worked which could cause a tiny pin to swell to the size of a big nail, and then shrink again. Then he showed me. And it is no magic at all. Just the fatness of that glass that makes things underneath it look a dozen times bigger than they are. *Magnifies* them, he called it, and asked me if I would like to see a small drop of water magnified. Oh! my grandfather, oh! my father, oh! my uncles, that little drop looked like a handful!" Manikam cupped his palm to show exactly what space the drop could have filled.

"Do tell!" gasped grandfather.

"Mercy on us!" breathed the others. There seemed to be no end to the things these Christians could do.



Well! Well! Well!
These new Inklings about little drops of water threw Mani-
kam's whole family into a terrible state of mind.



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"That is not all of it, either," said Manikam; "for the Doctor Sahib screwed the microscope so that I could see even more clearly, and behold, the water was *alive*! It squirmed with little wriggly animals. A thousand of them, grandfather! Maybe ten thousand of them—I do not know, for I am not good at figures. Anyhow I did not stay to count, for I jumped back, crying: 'It is magic! I am afraid. Let me get away quickly.' But Sathiavadam had come to stand beside the Doctor Sahib. Sathiavadam was a man of our own caste before he became a Christian, and he would not fill my ears with foolishness, for he said this was not magic,—it was science. Science is the law of knowledge about the things God created, he explained to me. *Any* drop of water is full of living creatures. If I didn't believe it, run out and get him some, from anywhere. Choose it myself. Ordinary water. He would soon prove that it was not enchanted, but just naturally alive."

Grandfather smote his knee impatiently: "Well, did you go? Did you get it?"

"Of course, I went," cried Manikam, "I wanted to know. So I went for very good water. I went to the kitchen. The cook was making a cake and he was none too pleased to have me bursting in there until I told him what I wanted the water for. Then he became very angry. 'Take all you want!' he cried, waving his hands in a fine large way, 'take a cupful! Take a pitcherful! Take a tubful! I never heard such nonsense as these sahibs get off about water. 'Boil every drop!' orders the Mem Sahib. Why, it's

good water, Manikam. It comes out of the village well. Full of animals, indeed! Wriggling, indeed! Bah! I smile in my beard.' ”

“That’s the way to talk!” said grandfather approvingly. “That cook has sense.”

“W-well,” wavered Manikam, “you won’t think so, long. For with my own eyes I saw the Doctor Sahib put a drop of this fresh water on a little clean slab, I saw him slip the slab under the fat glass and screw it down. Then I shut one eye so that I could squint through the glass with the other eye, for that is the way to see through a microscope, and, oh! my grandfather, it *wriggled*! Ten thousand living creatures crept around on that slab. They squirmed! ‘Is *all* water that way?’ I cried. ‘Yes,’ said the Doctor Sahib. ‘Yes,’ said Sathiavadam, ‘and some water is even worse. Water from the Ganges, for instance. It is even more alive than this.’ ”

“Then,” said grandfather shuddering, “how dare we ever drink another drop of it? Our religion forbids us to take life, yet here we have been destroying the creatures that live in water! Horrible of us! Reckless of us! The gods must be incensed at us! And I, who drank all the Ganges water I could to gain peace, oh! what a sin I committed, what ancestors I may have swallowed!”

“This is awful!” sighed the uncles.

“Dreadful!” wailed the aunts.

But Manikam tried to comfort them. “There is nothing to fear. The Lord God made the water. He made it for man to drink. One day when God’s son

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was here among men He said: 'I am the Water of Life, drink of me.' This just shows you that it is *safe* to drink water. Safe. But very interesting."

"Unsafe! And very terrible!" said grandfather sternly. "This Christians' God is nothing to men of our caste. We have our own gods to consider, our own idols to please. What will they think of men like us who kill life every time we take a drink? I have never known unhappiness such as I feel now. We must give a feast to the idols, my sons. We must go on a pilgrimage. We must try to wipe out from their memories our wickedness!"

Manikam sighed: "It lies in my heart to tell you the thing I know. I know that a brass *idol* is no more important than a brass bowl. He does not eat his rice. If he falls over on his nose, he stays on his nose until I pick him up. But the Lord God made the world. They tell me this in school. It is something called geography. The Lord God made the dry land, and He made the rivers and pools. He makes the rain. He made the sun, the moon and the stars. He made everything for us. There is nothing anywhere to fear."

"The boy is crazy!" sobbed granny, wagging her head.

"He is bewitched by those Christians!"

"Ask Machamma," said Manikam; "she is only a girl, but ask her if she is afraid of evil spirits any more."

Machamma was brought in.

"No, I'm not afraid," she said, "the Saviour takes care of me all day."

Devidas grumbled.

Grandfather mumbled.

"This school business has gone too far," said the uncles. "If this thing keeps up we will lose caste. What shall we do about it?"

"Keep the children home from school, for one thing," ordered grandfather.

"Give them a good whipping," said Devidas sternly. "We can beat all this nonsense out of them in no time at all."

"Watch them all day," said the Old Aunt, "or they will be running away to those Christians."

Manikam sighed.

Machamma cried.

It did seem as if this was too much of a punishment all on account of one little drop of water! But the whippings hurt just as much as if the water had been an ocean. And they did no good to anybody.

For Manikam did not forget school.

Machamma did not forget about the Saviour.

Grandfather did not forget about those animals in water. Almost every day he worried about them:—were they *really* in water? What were they called, Manikam? (Manikam had a great search in his brain before he could remember that the sick animals were bacteria; he forgot the names of the well ones. It didn't really matter—they were mostly sick in Indian water, the Doctor Sahib had said.) Grandfather puzzled his dear old head—dared he take a drink? dared

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he even *eat*, when his rice was stewed in water? dared he walk out on a rainy day—he might crush an ancestor? Life was hardly worth living. . . .

So he went to the temple priests. And the priests laughed long and merrily. “Water *alive*? What a joke! It is just one of those things that the Christians say. They are always saying things about water. The Mem Sahib with the gold hair never grows tired of talking about the well. But it is all nonsense. Perfect nonsense.”

Grandfather was so relieved that he gave a handsome present to the priests. They looked fatter than ever the next day. So did grandfather, for he had a square meal to make up for all the slim meals of the past week.

“I was really frightened,” he said.

“So were we!” said the uncles.

“And we,” added the aunts.

But Machamma and Manikam never said a word, aloud. Down in their hearts they were praying.

XIV

CUT! CUT! CUT! CA-DA-CUT!

IT seemed to Machamma that her whole world toppled about her ears. It just *couldn't* be possible that school would be going on without her; that other little girls would be scratching sentences on slates and reading out of primers, getting wisdom, while she grew daily stupider and stupider—watched by granny lest she run away to the forbidden school, watched by the Old Aunt, watched by the Young Aunt, watched even by the little red hen.

"If I only had my primer," sighed Machamma. Then more wonderful yet: "Oh, if I only had Blessedness!"

She ventured indoors to see if she could tease money out of them to buy this Book of Blessedness. "I could read you stories from it, maybe!" she said.

But Granny grunted her disapproval: "Tut! Tut! are you so precious to your father that he will drop ten annas in your hand? It is a lot of money. And you aren't worth your rice, as it is! Always getting us into trouble, way back from the beginning: mud-pies, and that wretched business of giving away the hen. Drawing down the anger of the gods on our heads. And now asking for money—go away, silly child!"

This was no new tale to the girl who was only a



Oh, if only *all* the hens in India would be as cheerfully obliging as Machamma's, how wonderful it would be! But since there is only one such hen to "buy blessedness," it leaves you and me to provide Bibles for all the other puzzled heathen families.

Blot, so she went out in the courtyard wondering if she had *anything* she could give in exchange for Blessedness . . . something that would not be missed instantly? . . . no, not a thing. . . .

"Cut-cut-cut! Ca-da-cut!" clucked the hen, not only sympathetically, but obviously strutting around to attract her attention.

"You hen!" sighed Machamma. "Don't you remember what trouble I got into once for giving you away to the Lord God? Well, I haven't forgotten those bruises yet. And you *aren't* mine after all, so you just go and lay your old egg if that's what you're cackling about!"

With a grieved but dignified strut the hen waddled away; then, thinking to return good for evil, she turned around once more and clucked suggestively: "Cut-cut-cut! Ca-da-cut!"

"Go away! Go away! Can't you see I'm busy thinking?"

The hen chuckled. She let down that funny little inner eyelid of hers and seemed to wink. "Cut-cut-cut!" she whispered.

It was then that Machamma caught her inkling!

"Oh! Oh! Oh!" she cried softly, staring at the scrawny little hen in complete surprise: "Do you *mean* it? You aren't joking? Could you? Would you?"

"Cut-cut-cut! Ca-da-cut!" she replied cheerfully and teetered rapidly over to her favorite hiding place.

Machamma flew after her and eagerly thrusting her hand in the straw, pulled out—an egg! Warm. New. Fresh.

"Oh, thank you, dear, dear red hen! You don't need to cackle again. I understand. Oh, *please* don't cackle—couldn't you lay them quietly for several days without bragging out-loud about it, so I can hide enough eggs to buy Blessedness?"

"Watch me!" winked the hen.

One day, two days, three days, four days, five days, six days . . . and six eggs were hidden away in a very very secret place. But Granny noticed the lack of eggs, and the Old Aunt seemed everywhere at once, so Machamma dared wait no longer. Rolling the six secret eggs in a corner of her saree she ran to the mission bungalow.

Bonnie Aunt was aghast to see her: "My darling," she cried, "how could you do this forbidden thing? They will punish you again if they find out."

But Machamma's eyes were like stars. "Oh, Amma," she cried breathlessly, "I just came to buy the Book of Blessedness. Could I have it quick? God's little red hen will lay more secret eggs to pay for it, she's just as interested as I am—only isn't it too bad of her, she *will* cackle so about them? But could you trust me with Blessedness until she lays enough to pay for it?"

"Yes, little heart of my heart!" Bonnie Aunt cried, kissing her and knowing instantly that it was the little copy of Matthew's gospel which she called "Blessedness" because she had been learning the Beatitudes in school so recently. "Here it is, dear. Take it and run home, God bless you."

"And bless the red hen, too," Machamma added anxiously.

"Yes, and the hen! But don't try to pay me any more, just take the Bible as a present, dear. Surely you've *earned* it. Now hurry. Good-by! Good-by!"

Machamma flew safely home and nobody dreamed what was hidden in the folds of her coral-pink saree. Except possibly the hen. She clucked in a contented fashion as if to say: "Well, I *said* I would get even with your father on account of that offering business, and I have!"

"You're a little angel in feathers," Machamma sighed. And that very day she whispered to her mother: "See, this is Blessedness! Isn't it lovely? Feel it! Don't you like the cover on it? Don't you wish I were wise enough to read it straight off like Amma can do? But I know how the word 'God' looks in print, so I think I will mark it with a pencil every time I find it."

At the end of the very first day she was really excited: "Look, my mother! See how popular God is—He's *everywhere* in this Book! I guess there couldn't be Blessedness without Him."

And in the simple love of her heart Pitchamma thought this new God was certainly *in* her daughter, just as these Christians claimed He would be.

Things went along so smoothly after this that Machamma grew almost careless with her Bible, reading it openly. It seemed a braver thing than so much secrecy. But the Old Aunt spied on her, and one

sunny morning a shadow fell across the page and Machamma's father stood there, pointing:

"Disobedient child! I'll teach you to forget this Christian stuff! See that little fire burning in the courtyard? Go and drop your book into it—hurry, slowpoke!"

Poor Machamma. And the Old Aunt chuckling in the doorway! With very unwilling steps the little girl walked over to the fire.

"Oh, my father, I cannot burn Blessedness!" she said.

"Drop—that—book—in—the—fire!" Devidas thundered.

Then suddenly Machamma remembered the worm and the sermon it had preached in church. She opened her Bible. "Look, father," she begged, "see how many times I have found God written in this Book! Yet even if you did burn Blessedness it is written on my heart that same number of times. You cannot burn it out of *me*, just as you never could *beat* it out of me, either."

Devidas snatched the Bible from her hand and dropped it into the reddest part of the fire—golden tongues of flame licked hungrily around the corners of the precious leaves—they curled up at the edges—they blazed up high—they blackened—they smoked—they died down—

"There!" cried Devidas, "that finishes that!"

But Machamma knew better. The sermon the worm had preached was comforting her; and her father went away muttering: "This is a queer thing I see with my

eyes, a girl-child becoming brave like a boy! I beat her and shake her and scold her, but the shine of something new is still in her eyes. What are we coming to in this town, anyhow?"

Oh, it was no wonder that the priests in their yellow robes were getting worried! For on still evenings you could always hear the sound of the Christians' songs floating out of their church windows. And every night the Christians prayed: "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, *on earth* as it is in heaven."

On *earth* seemed to mean the Town of the Twisted Tulsi Tree!

Grandfather noticed the difference.

The uncles noticed the difference.

Manikam did not boss his mother. Machamma did not quail before her father.

"There is a certain *polish* on the faces of these Christians," said grandfather.

"That's it!" agreed the uncles. "A shining in their eyes."

"A kindness in their hands," added the aunts.

"A happiness in their steps," sighed granny.

"I am curious about a religion you cannot *burn* out or *beat* out or *bruise* out," said Devidas.

The truth of the matter is that although they never read a word of the Bible itself, yet here were Machamma and Manikam being *walk-about living* Bibles at home, so that every one in the family could read this verse in Matthew's gospel: "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

"Seems to me we might almost as well send these children back to school as to have them sitting around here with their heads full of these new ideas," grandfather finally said.

"That's it! Send them back to school," nodded the uncles.

"School?" echoed the aunts.

"*School!*" beamed Machamma and Manikam. Oh, this was too good to be true! They could hardly wait till morning.

XV

MANIKAM SHAKES THE TULSI TREE

THE most terrifyingly wonderful thing had come to town to belong to the Doctor Sahib. Manikam talked of nothing else, for imagine a *tin* bullock cart that could go without oxen! And go like the wind, too. Imagine feeding it at the front end with water and oil, then turning a wheel midway of the thing so that it went *chuf! chuf! chuf!* at the back end! Had anybody in the Town of the Twisted Tulsi Tree ever heard of a thing like that? Nobody had. What was it called?

"The Doctor Sahib calls it 'Leezie.' Oh, how he does love that 'Leezie'! When he goes like the wind there is a tooter in front which wails '*Honk! Honk!*' The heathen boys say the tooter is full of evil spirits. Heathen boys are so foolish."

You, of course, have guessed that this curious monster was a Ford car, sent to Dr. Drake by the churches of his denomination in America.

"Bonnie," he would say a dozen times a week, "your old wish has come true—it is just as if there were four of me now! For in one Friday morning don't I whiz out to visit those villages thirty miles away and whiz back again in the time it used to take our poor old oxen to plod to the nearest village. It's fine, feeling that I'm

a medical *quartet* now! This will make the statistics look fatter. . . .”

But nobody ever dreamed that the statistics could grow by leaps and bounds as they did on the wonderful day when a letter came from the Village of the Silent River. A wonderful letter which made the Drakes feel that playing Hide and Go Seek had certainly paid, for this was the petition:—

“We, the people of the Village of the Silent River, are sending to you because we can no longer serve our village idols. After every harvest we have sacrificed sheep and brought our new rice to the Goddess of Abundance, but what has she done for us? Nothing. We have sacrificed also to the Cholera Goddess and to the Smallpox God, but we still fall sick and many of us die. When our women buy new sarees they bring them to the temple to be blessed before they wear them, and sometimes the priests tear off a yard or two for themselves. When we are sick or in trouble the priests laugh in our faces unless we bring money; they spit on the ground in indifference at us. Out of chips of wood the idol-makers carve us gods to worship in our homes, but they do not satisfy the hunger in our hearts.

“But then came the Sahib Who Chases Pain, and the Mem Sahib Who Makes People Glad. We did not mind it that she had gold hair after we once heard her stories of the Jesus God. They reminded us of you. Like you, He healed diseases. He has twisted love into the hearts of all our village. We are of one



Surely a Tin Lizzie never did a nobler piece of work than to shake the Tulsi Tree! It gives you and me an Inkling of the mysterious ways in which God works, doesn't it?



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mind in this matter. We would get down into the Jesus God religion. Therefore leave us no longer to the devil priests and to the wooden idols but come and make us true men of Jesus.

“(Signed) Ramaswami,
“The Braider of Mats.”

Bonnie Aunt could hardly believe her ears: “It was in that very village where they stoned me two years ago,” she said; “oh, Harry, let us hurry out to them at once! Couldn’t we stay a week? Couldn’t we take Billy and his ayah, and how about Machamma?”

“Manikam, too,” said Dr. Drake; “I will see how their grandfather feels about it.”

Grandfather finally consented. Two years of watching Christians had convinced him they could do no harm to Manikam. As far as *Machamma* went, who worried about a mere girl?

It was a task in itself to pack “Leezie”—plenty of bedding, plenty of food, three grown-ups, two children and Billy: would everything go in? Everything always goes into a Ford, so off they *chuf-chuffed* in “Leezie,” faster than the wind, to that little waiting Village of the Silent River.

As long as she lives, Machamma will never forget the sights she saw that day. A hundred smiling people; two hundred little wooden gods piled up to build a bonfire; four larger temple idols laid on top. . . .

“We want you to burn them, Sahib!” they cried. And when darkness came, Dr. Drake struck a match and above the crackling of the flames and the snapping

of the wood he lifted up his voice to tell of the Lord Jesus, the light of the world.

"That is good!" sighed the men.

"That is true!" sighed the women.

"We are hungry to hear it again, Sahib. Tell it again."

It was a wonderful week, and Machamma often said to the strange girls in the village: "I, too, am a Christian, but my family do not permit it!"

Little she knew the joy that lay ahead of her, or that Manikam's exploring nature was to bring a happy ending to her career as a Blot! For Manikam felt that by this time he knew "Leezie" fully as well as the doctor, so on their return to the Town of the Twisted Tulsi Tree, Manikam begged gently: "Sahib, let me ride Leezie into town. I know all the little things you twist and all the little things you step on, and I know how to toot the tooter!"

"Do let him," begged Bonnie Aunt, "but keep your hand on the wheel, too, Harry."

So that is how it happened that a new chauffeur came rolling down "Main Street" that afternoon! All went well until Manikam was about to pass his father's house and then he grew self-conscious. He put on airs! He tooted the horn! He glanced aside to see if anybody was watching—yes, *the whole family* was there! Manikam was so proud that he did some little unexpected thing, nobody knows just what, but "Leezie" swerved. "Leezie" crashed into something! There was a snapping sound . . . a splintering sound . . . and down fell the Tulsi Tree. It was unbelievable!

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"Whoa there!" cried Billy from the back seat, perfectly entranced to have an accident.

Dr. Drake turned off "Leezie's" gas, and he and Manikam got out. "Knocked her clean over, boy," he sighed, "that's pretty bad!"

Manikam laughed: "Sahib, I've hated that little bush-tree for years. I've always wanted to do this, and now it's done. But I can't think what father will say."

"I can't think what *grandfather* will say!" sighed Machamma, secretly delighted also.

So surely this is the time to tell you how the Town of the Twisted Tulsi Tree received its name.

For a tulsi tree, or shrub, is sacred throughout India to the god Vishnu—it is considered as his representative. Manikam's family gave great attention to that tree which grew so near their door, watering it faithfully, plastering the ground around it daily with fresh mud, hanging a lamp near it at night lest it feel lonely in the dark! When the hot winds blew and the grass turned brown and the wells dried up, that tulsi tree received far more attention than the child Machamma, yes, even more than the boy Manikam! For a shelter was placed around it, a porous jar filled with water was suspended over it to keep it always moist and green. For Vishnu was a jealous god—he must be pleased.

On rainy days, from childhood up, both Manikam and Machamma had heard the myth as granny told it, about the woman named Tulsi who had knelt at many shrines in search of peace and had been so very holy that when she came to die she asked that she might be the wife of the god Vishnu. Vishnu already had a

wife named Lakshmi, who was so enraged at this request that she changed the woman Tulsi into a tree! But Vishnu was sorry for this devout follower, and assuming another form, announced himself as Salagrama and promised to stay near her. . . .

Of all the tulsi trees in India these villagers would tell you that theirs had grown the tallest; there was a curious twist in its top branches, for once a stroke of lightning hit it—bending it askew, but it did not die, so the Vishnuites nodded to each other: “A very good sign—that!” And when any of them came to die a sprig of the tree was put in their hands and the Salagrama stone was placed nearby.

It was *this* tree that Manikam shook, and swayed, and broke. Yet he was glad. But all afternoon the excitement in town was terrible. Wails of mourning could be heard as the people prepared it with great ceremony for its funeral rites.

And that night grandfather fell ill.

“He will die,” said the uncles. “This is the doing of that boy Manikam. This is what comes of having a Christian in the family. Let us disown him. . . .”

“He will die,” wailed the aunts—all except Pit-chamma. She whispered in Machamma’s ear, and Machamma hurried down the dark street.

When she returned there were men of the caste who beat tom-toms drumming in grandfather’s ears to dislodge the evil spirits.

“You may do what you please with me, father,” she cried, “but it is neither evil spirits nor lack of a tulsi tree that is making grandfather ill; it is a real sickness.

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A sickness to be cured with pills. Could you not let the Doctor Sahib give him some? Think of the man named Sunderaya who lay in a stupor three weeks, as good as dead, but white pills cured him!"

"Never!" said Devidas.

"Never!" said the uncles.

"Never!" said the aunts.

And while they were sternest and surest, in walked Dr. Drake! In the middle of the night; with "Lee-zie" *chuf-chuffing* outside.

"Stop those tom-toms!" he shouted.

The low caste drummers stopped in surprise.

"Help me carry him out to my car," he next ordered.

"But—" started the uncles.

"You are deliberately killing your father by each moment's delay. If he dies it will all be your fault. Come, take his feet, you two. Take his shoulders, you others."

And the first thing any one knew the old gentleman was a patient in that tiny hospital, and five visitors each day stalked in and stalked out. But their eyes were open! And their ears were open! Inch by inch their hearts were open, too!

Bonnie Aunt used to meet them one at a time every day: "He is much better, isn't he?"

"So it seems," said Devidas.

"Apparently!" the others begrudged admitting it; but what *could* you say, with grandfather crunching his pills and acting quite normal?

Bonnie Aunt tried a present for each of them. Bibles! They took them, salaaming. "It is medicine for the heart," she said. "Machamma will read it to

you, Devidas. Almost as good as a son, isn't she? Especially as it was her swift feet that brought the doctor to you in time."

"My heart is drawn out toward these Christians," said Devidas one day.

"Ours also," said the uncles.

For *seeing* is believing! Then came the day when grandfather was as good as new. "Wreathe me a garland of oleanders," he ordered.

Pitchamma wreathed them as fast as she could, and the next time Dr. Drake strolled into the hospital grandfather garlanded him! He also made a little speech:

"Sahib," he said, "I must get down into this new religion quickly, for I am now an old man and very very hungry for peace. I thought I had peace corked up in my vase of Ganges water till Machamma spilled it. Anyhow, Manikam tells me that water is vile—full of living creatures. But this Jesus, how He does draw out my heart now that I know Him better."

"Mine, too," said Devidas.

"And mine," the uncles echoed.

So that is how a wave of joy started to sweep through the whole town; but the Christians in America read only the one small line in tiny print:

Converts for April 37

For that is the way it always is with missionary statistics: they look so flat and tame boiled down in little type,—unless, of course, we have an inkling how such lines get ready to print!

XVI

WORTH HER WEIGHT IN GOLD

ONE year passed.
Two years passed.

And in the third year Tim and Tom received this letter: —

Salaam, you dear young Wisc-Acres!

Bonnie Aunt is so busy with Billy this morning that I don't believe she can write her usual letter in time to catch the next mail steamer, so I take my pen in hand to do her duty for her. I wish you could fetch your Seven League Boots and step over an ocean or two to see my patients in neat white rows lying in my brand-new hospital! Richer-Than-Rubies is in the children's ward telling Bible stories; two dozen spellbound brownie faces lie there drinking in every word. It was worth waiting five years for—this hospital! It has big verandas with stucco pillars (verandas make it cooler indoors) and everything else it ought to have, especially a laboratory where Manikam helps me with labels and scales, etc. He's going to be a doctor, did I tell you? To see him filling vials and shining instruments you'd think he was a full-fledged M.D. already! On Fridays when "Leezie" and I play Hide and Go Seek, Manikam comes along to dole out the medicine. Really the greatest help to me, for I pick up the proper

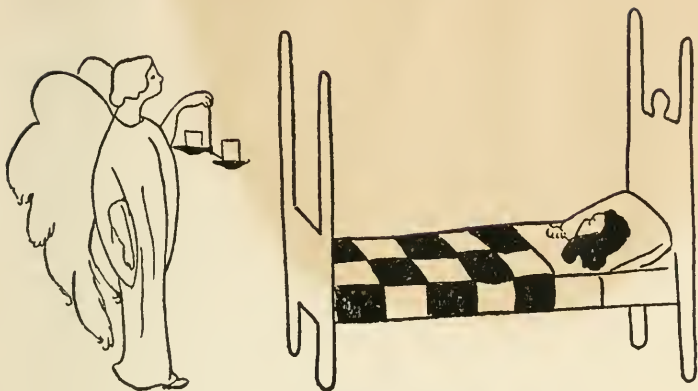
bottle and say: "Give 20 capsules to Old Man Crick in His Back."

"Yes, Sahib," says Manikam, like a soldier at attention. The time I used to spend warning patients just how to apply tonics and swallow pills is now free, because Manikam does my warning to perfection: "Hold out your tongue this way, see? Lay the pill thus: Draw in your tongue. Close your lips. Gulp! Quick, if it tastes queer; slow, if you like the sweetness. Then two swallows of water. Only regarding that water, it must be *boiled*, then cooled. Water that is not boiled is full of bad disease animals. . . ." We call him The Little Brown Doctor. He is doing splendidly in school, and in two more years may even be ready for college.

I am disturbed that Bonnie Aunt has not sent you the lovely composition which Machamma wrote about her in our girls' boarding school, forty miles away. Perhaps she felt it was too complimentary to share, but I want you to see it—both to show you how cleverly Machamma is learning English at that school and also to show the dear influence which Bonnie Aunt has had on her. Our friend Miss Harrow mailed it to us.

"THE WOMAN I ADMIRE THE MOST"

"Amma is low as a American, but for India she is right high. Littler than the doctor sahib but higher up than Billy. The most beautifulest thing I have ever saw is her face. It is so pleasant. It makes everything so pleasant. When I go away from school,



Wouldn't it be a curious sensation—to have an angel come and weigh us while we sleep? It makes us wonder if we would be "weighed and found wanting" like dear Tim or be "worth our weight in gold" like Machamma!



Amma smiles me away. When I come back next morning, Amma smiles me back. When I are sick, Amma smiles me well. When I are bad, Amma smiles me good. If sad lady met Amma they are become joy. Her head do got on top all gold hair with sunshine in it. And the sweetest little ears. Her nose is not high. One tooth hath gold in a lovely crack.

"Amma came to our village across the sea for teach us. She is always busy of things that couldn't wait another minute. You cannot make stop Amma. Her hand is clever. It can cook more nice than the cook. It can plant flowers more prettier than the mali. It can sew dainty than the dirzy. It can squeeze with love. It can do anything. Even it can ride 'Leezie.' But it cannot slap and spank. That is Amma.

"God loves Amma with a special. She is dearly in His sight. I pray Jesus make me 3 inches of Amma.

"Amen."

Well, Tim and Tom, we two grown-ups sat down and cried like little children over this quaint composition, while Bonnie Aunt kept saying: "I am not like that! It is just her love—oh, she is worth her weight in gold, that Machamma. Harry, we *must* see she gets a college education. She would make a marvelous teacher."

"Yes, Bonnie, dear," I answered, "but college *costs*; and Devidas is poor."

"Devidas is saving up his annas for this very thing; and I am saving *mine*! Pitchamma skimps the rice pot a little every meal, and even granny wants to learn

crocheting, so that she can sell her lace for Machamma's education. The ladies in our church at home are also saving, and I really think that Tim and Tom might like to help, don't you?"

"So I'm writing to ask: Would you?"

"You've always done a lot for Machamma, you know. First the postcard; then the doll; those scrap-books that you pasted on long rainy afternoons; those boxes of toys and trinkets which you always sent for Christmas with everything from safety-pins to spinning-tops! Machamma would always get her share and treasure it! "Just think! Amma's family in America have love for me that reaches way across the sea," she always says, hugging her gift in her arms. So we can safely say you've helped us bring her up this far—don't you want to go on with it? I thought I'd drop the inkling—turn it into a clinkling if you can, and send it to our mission Board Rooms.

Love from your faraway

Pied Piper.

P. S.—Bonnie Aunt has just come in with news and insists on adding a postscript in the corner of this letter.

P. S. 2.—A *corner*, indeed! Why, dear Twinnies, I have such a piece of news that it deserves a whole sheet by itself, for this afternoon Devidas paid me a visit. Of course I asked for Machamma, and he said: "Machamma is no more. I came to tell you."

"Dead?" I gasped, my heart like a stone inside me.

"Oh, no, Amma," he said gently, "I do not think that Father God needs Machamma in heaven just yet.

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I think that He has polished up her face with joy to live in India. But *Machamma*—Blot—what kind of a name is that for a girl who becomes dearer than a son to her father? Bah! I will have no more of *Machamma*. It is gone forever, that old name; so I want you to write her a letter at her school and tell her her father renames her *Santhoshamma*—*Joy*! Tell her it came to my heart that I should do this gladness for the Saviour while I sat in church singing:

“‘Just as I am and waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark *blot*,
To Thee, whose love can cleanse each spot,
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!’

I like calling her ‘Joy,’ don’t you?”

“I love it,” I said. “I love it because it is true, and I will send it to her at once.”

So, dear Twinnies, we will never write again of *Machamma*; but I think you will be hearing many times of *Santhoshamma*. She is worth her weight in gold, dear girl. Did the Pied Piper suggest your helping us save up a fund to send her by and by to the Woman’s Christian College in Madras? This P. S. is so long it must mean Please Stop! Lovingly,
Bonnie Aunt.

The night this letter came Tim went to bed really upset about it.

“I haven’t got one cent to spare,” she groaned as she snuggled her head in the pillow. “I have such a teeny allowance—of course I’d just *love* to help

save up for Machamma, but I don't see where the money's coming from . . . *worth . . . her . . . weight . . . in . . . gold . . .*"

No sooner had she thought this than a curious thing happened, for two angels came tiptoeing into the room, and the first angel said: "Is she sleeping?"

"Yes," breathed the other one softly, leaning over the bed.

So Tim lay stiller than still, and looked as sound asleep as a wide-awake person can, because she wanted to hear what in the world was the matter.

Imagine her surprise, therefore, when the first angel opened an account book, and said, sighing: "Then I suppose we had better begin weighing her."

"Dear me! Dear me!" throbbed Tim, expecting any second to be lifted bodily from bed and fastened on the little scales. (*Those scales! Surely they were the very ones Manikam had used to weigh the idol's food. . . .*)

"We'll begin with the candy boxes," said the angel with the scales in a most businesslike way, and set a box in the scales at once. ("It's *empty*," smiled Tim.)

"How much does it weigh?" asked the angel-accountant.

"Thirty cents," said the other; "half-pound box, you see. Then she's bought chocolate almond bars; ten cents on Monday. Ten cents on Thursday. Ten cents on Saturday. Got it listed?"

"Yes—that's sixty cents' weight of candy. Now weigh the ice-cream sodas."

"April 2 she 'treated' three friends—thirty cents.

April 5, chocolate sundaes, self—fifteen cents. April 7, 'treated' Elsie and self—twenty cents."

"Wait a minute," gasped the accountant; "you're going too fast. Does the girl *live* on sodas?"

"This was Easter vacation week, you see," explained the angel. "I suppose she had nothing else to do."

"Oh, *Easter*? Well, wouldn't you think the mere fact that it *was* Easter would make her place a little more weight on the *Saviour's* side of the account book than on the self side?"

"They're pretty thoughtless at her age—"

"Certainly *pretty*," whispered the angel, taking a closer look at dear Tim.

"But not a bit prettier than that little Indian Blot-Who-Turned-to-Joy!" the other angel added quickly.

"Machamma? Why, she's the loveliest of all earth's daughters in *my* eyes. Lovely inside her head as well as just on the outside, for when you weigh up *Machamma* you don't have to make any of these sad excuses! She may be pretty young, but she's burning with one thought—to help every one in India."

"I suppose that's because she has come up out of heathen darkness into a marvelous Light; whereas this dear little Tim Laurence is so used to the Light that she doesn't realize it *is* Light. She does not see that it's worth passing on to any one else . . . can't skimp herself to do it, evidently!"

"Evidently not! Yet I think she'd really like to, only she doesn't plan ahead. Easter sodas would have helped! And now how about car fares? If she only ~~started~~ ~~earlier~~ to school she could just as well walk

and save much of her weight in gold, of course—”

On and on they went, while Tim shrank smaller and smaller in bed. It was rather horrible. “To-morrow I may not even be visible,” she worried. “I must be one of those little small souls. Oh, I wish they’d stop weighing me. I’m so ashamed . . . if they’d come back *to-morrow* night they’d find I have learned better . . . if they keep on now there won’t be anything left of me . . . all squandered on *things*. . . . I didn’t dream I was a girl-with-so-much-money. . . .”

Tom woke her up with a pillow. He stood in the doorway grinning. “I should say that *was* a dream, Tim; you, a girl-with-so-much-money? Wake up, it’s morning and I know forty ’leven ways to earn some dollars. Just wait till you hear!”

And even if there is no time to drop an inkling of the ways they earned those dollars (yearning over them, and burning over them, and learning over them!) at least you already know enough of *India* Inklings to guess what joyful things each clinkling will accomplish across the deep blue sea—for Santhoshamma.

THE END



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